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GABRIEL MARCEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE SELF.

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# GABRIEL MARCEL'S CONCEPTION OF THE SELF

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ABSTRACT

Gabriel Marcel's Conception of the Self

Patricia Flagg Sanborn

Gabriel Marcel's philosophical writings span a broad range of topics. Relying on a non-systematic approach to philosophical issues, he explores problems on all levels of philosophical inquiry. It is the contention of this study that many of Marcel's insights can be organized around a conception of the self. The self is the starting-point of philosophical inquiry for Marcel, yet this is neither the abstract transcendental self of the Idealists nor the collection of "states of consciousness" of the Empiricists. Instead, the self is a "presence" in which one "participates." The response to the query "What am I?" is an affirmation of one's being, not an objective statement of fact.

Marcel's conception of the self is composed of three basic themes--an "ontological lack," the process of self-realization, and the realized self. These three themes are reviewed with special attention to Marcel's criticisms of objective conceptions of the self, and to his attempt to provide an alternative to these conceptions. Included are detailed analyses of the concepts of "ontological exigency," receptivity, freedom and disquiet. The development from a state of a lack of being to a state of full realization is, for Marcel, a development bearing both ontological and ethical import. The realized self is the most valuable self.

As Marcel's conception of the self emerges, a number of difficulties become apparent. The following questions are central to the analysis. First

of all, what is the self? If, as Marcel argues, it cannot be an object, how is self-knowledge possible? Furthermore, is the self a discovery or an achievement? Is it always present or is it something in the process of being created? Finally, is the state of self-realization, as presented by Marcel, possible at all? Since Marcel frequently argues that for the self to exist, there must always be an experience of "disquiet," how can realization be attained?

The difficulty in finding answers to these questions within Marcel's position is discussed in the final chapter of this study. It is maintained that Marcel's conception of the self is limited by a number of Idealist presuppositions, in spite of his criticisms of the Idealists. As a result, his position often works from conflicting assumptions and on occasion becomes circular.

An alternative to Marcel's conception of the self is offered, in which some of Marcel's views are incorporated, but from which the Idealist presuppositions are eliminated. It is suggested that the self is a structure, and that the experiences which Marcel discusses in the analyses of self-realization can be best understood in the light of a structural conception of the self.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS BY MARCEL

| | |
|---|---|
| EA | Etre et avoir. |
| EB | The Existential Background of Human Dignity. |
| FP | Fragments philosophiques: 1900-1914. |
| FR | Le mystère de l'être. Tome II: Foi et réalité. |
| HCH | Les hommes contre l'humain. |
| HP | L'homme problématique. |
| HV | Homo viator: Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance. |
| JM | Journal métaphysique. |
| MO | Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique. |
| PI | Présence et immortalité. |
| RA | "Regard en arrière." |
| RI | Du refus à l'invocation. |
| RM | Le mystère de l'être. Tome I: Réflexion et mystère. |

# INTRODUCTION

The philosophical writings of Gabriel Marcel span a broad range of topics. In his determination to remain a non-systematic philosopher, he moves freely through many kinds of philosophical inquiry from the most abstract of metaphysical analyses to detailed discussions of contemporary social and political problems. His published books and articles proliferate, indicating his interests in drama, music, and criticism as well as philosophy.[1]

This study is an attempt to characterize and criticize Marcel's conception of the self. His conception falls into a distinct pattern. Marcel does not make this pattern explicit, largely because his commitment to an "exploratory" approach to philosophy leads him to stress the occasional insight and the use of journal and essay. Even the Gifford Lectures, Marcel's most sustained philosophical effort, are organized not according to the order present in the ideas but largely according to the stages of his personal philosophical development.

However, within the writings pertaining to Marcel's conception of the self, his ideas group themselves around three basic themes. The first is that of a fundamental lack in the self. According to Marcel, there exists in most individuals a pervasive depersonalization and functionalization, creating a deep sense of "ontological lack." This sense of

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[1]The scope of Marcel's interests can be gauged by an examination of the bibliography of his writings through January, 1953, compiled by Roger Troisfontaines. Troisfontaines' two-volume work is the most complete secondary presentation of Marcel's philosophy. Roger Troisfontaines, De l'existence à l'Être: La philosophie de Gabriel Marcel, 2 tomes (Paris: J. Vrin, 1953).

lack is accompanied by and partly caused by the tendency to view the self as an object. Marcel's analysis of the "lack of being" and his criticisms of objective characterizations of the self occupy considerable space in his philosophical works and are reflected in many of his plays.[1]

The state of lack, however, can be transcended. Marcel's view of how such transcendence is possible constitutes the second theme in his conception of the self. He argues that an "ontological exigency" is experienced which initiates the desire to go beyond depersonalization and functionalization of the self. His discussions of the various means of self-realization make up the bulk of his philosophical output. It is here that one finds Marcel's analyses of activity, receptivity and freedom as well as the discussions of hope, intersubjectivity and fidelity.

The third aspect of Marcel's conception of the self is his notion of a realized self. He suggests that it is possible to speak of the self as it "really is"--a self which is in part a discovery and in part an achievement. In this aspect of Marcel's conception, questions begin to emerge concerning his conclusions, questions primarily about the nature of the self and about philosophical inquiry into the self. The final chapter of this study will be a critical exploration of these difficulties with particular attention to the possibilities of resolving them by modifications in some of Marcel's basic arguments.

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[1]Marcel draws frequently from his plays to illustrate his philosophical arguments. However, he maintains that his interests in philosophy and the theater developed independently of each other. See Gabriel Marcel, Le seuil invisible (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1914), pp. 1-8. A number of commentators have explored the relationship between Marcel's dramatic and philosophical works. The following are the most extensive studies. Joseph Chenu, Le théâtre de Gabriel Marcel et sa signification métaphysique (Paris: Aubier, 1948); Zachary Taylor Ralston, Gabriel Marcel's Paradoxical Expression of Mystery: A Stylistic Study of "La soif" (The Catholic University of America Studies in Romance Languages and Literatures, Vol.LXIII; Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1961); Edgard Sottiaux, Gabriel Marcel: Philosophe et dramaturge (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1956).

It is important to emphasize that in his discussions of the self, Marcel never makes explicit the tri-fold division which is used here. In fact, the material which provides the basis for this division is drawn from a number of Marcel's works and often from quite different contexts. However, the fact that the division is left implicit is a result of Marcel's method and is not an indication that there is no such pattern in his thought. For when his separate analyses of the self are consolidated, they repeatedly fall into the same division--that of ontological lack, the means of self-realization, and the realized self.

It could be objected that the organization of Marcel's analysis of the self into a "conception" violates his basic philosophical project. He often stresses that his work is not a system; and that to view it as such, is to misrepresent its exploratory and improvisatory character. However, the position will be taken here that, on the contrary, exploration and improvisation do not exclude systematic elements. Marcel's unusual method obscures these elements in his thought but does not eliminate them.

The emphasis on the underlying pattern of Marcel's conception of the self of necessity must underplay the role of metaphor, illustration and personal insight in his work. The variety of his style, as well as the frequent presentation in journal form, lend a distinct color, contributing in large part to Marcel's uniqueness among contemporary philosophers. Yet, because this aspect of his style often conceals the pattern behind his insights, there is a need for clarification and simplification. Marcel's comments on any one topic are widely scattered and call for concentration. This reorganization of his ideas allows for an elimination of some of the repetition which pervades his writings and provides a tool to handle diffuse material. Ultimately, however, any attempt to

systematize Marcel's thought about the self into a conception can only be justified by an appeal to his writings themselves.

At a number of points in the following discussion, Marcel's argument will invite criticism. However, critical analysis is deferred until the latter part of this study in an attempt to keep the exposition of Marcel's thought distinct as far as possible from an evaluation of it.

It will be noted in addition that with the exception of some brief initial comments, little attention is given to the chronological development of Marcel's philosophy or to his historical antecedents. Each of these topics warrants a treatment in its own right, but they extend beyond the scope of this study. Also, Marcel's place within the Existentialist tradition is not elaborated at any length. As Marcel himself points out, the major tenets of his position were developed prior to the publication of any of the major works of contemporary Existentialists. While in his later writings he introduces some brief studies of Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre, he maintains that these philosophers have no direct influence on his own work. While Marcel's conception of the self bears resemblances to the work of a number of the Existentialists, it cannot be reduced to that tradition. It stands independently, unique in its method of presentation and in many of its insights.

# CHAPTER I

## THE ROLE OF THE SELF

> Il y a un sens où il est vrai de dire que le seul problème métaphysique, c'est: que suis-je? Et qu'à celui-là les autres se ramènent: même le problème de l'existence des autres s'y réduit.[1]

The problem of the nature of the self pervades Marcel's writings. Speaking broadly, the whole of his philosophical work can be viewed as an attempt to provide insight into the question of what the self is. "C'est celle que je me pose lorsque je me demande qui je suis--et plus profondément encore lorsque je m'interroge sur le sens même de cette question."[2] Marcel's answer to this question is at once metaphysical, epistemological and ethical. Often, in fact, he intentionally blurs the traditional boundaries between the three fields. His basic concerns--what the self is, the extent and certainty of self-knowledge, and values in regard to the self--all inform each other.

Because of the breadth of Marcel's conception of the self, not all of its aspects can be considered. The focus here will be on the basic pattern of his conception and on some of the problems implicit in this pattern. However, since it can be argued that the pattern is due in part to Marcel's debt to Idealism, a brief analysis of the setting of his work is used to initiate the discussion.

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[1]Gabriel Marcel, Présence et immortalité (Paris: Flammarion, 1959), p. 21. Cited hereafter as PI.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, Le mystère de l'être: Tome I: Réflexion et mystère (Paris: Aubier, 1951), p. 98. Cited hereafter as RM.

## A. A Comment on Philosophical Setting

While the importance of the self in his thought initially suggests possible alignments with the Empiricist and Idealist traditions, Marcel dissociates his position vigorously from both schools of thought. He frequently calls himself a "realist."[1] He contends that the traditional views of the self are artifically narrow, leaving the philosopher with a far too limited notion of the range and possibilities of experience.

Marcel's quarrel with Empiricist theories of self is not developed to any length and yet is evident in a number of isolated comments. He directs his principal argument against what he considers to be the reductionist aspects of Empiricism. "Les philosophies selon moi les plus néfastes, les plus déshumanisantes, ... se sont précisément placées sur un terrain empirique."[2] The "mystery" of experience is ignored by Empiricists, as are experiences of transcendence. The latter experiences play a considerable role for Marcel, constituting situations in which the individual moves beyond the ordinary conditions of life. To underplay this aspect of experience would be to offer a truncated version of the self. Marcel contends further that the immediacy and uniqueness of an individual's experience is obscured, if not ignored, by the rigid and scientifically oriented studies of Empiricists.

More precisely, Empiricism falsely maintains that the self is made

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[1]Gabriel Marcel, Le mystère de l'être: Tome II: Foi et réalité (Paris: Aubier, 1951), p. 130. Cited hereafter as FR.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), p. 85. Cited hereafter as RI.

up of its own internal states.[1] In fact, the very phrase "state of consciousness" is self-contradictory. The concept of "state" is borrowed from the description of modifications of the body, in order to describe consciousness. As a consequence, consciousness is converted into an "incorporeal body." Marcel points out, "Quelle que soit la nature ultime de la conscience, elle ne peut évidemment pas être regardée comme un corps même incorporel."[2] In speaking of states of consciousness, the philosopher assumes that he can stand "outside of" consciousness, making the latter into an object. Here Marcel's criticism relies on his far more extensive attack on all objective characterizations of the self. To consider the self as a composite of objective states is, among other things, to deny the self concreteness and individuality.[3]

Not only Empiricism, Marcel contends, but Idealism as well misrepresents the self, although for different reasons. Marcel's relationship to the Idealist tradition is a complex one. While he dissociates himself completely from Idealism in his later writings, his early work stems almost

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[1] RM, p. 58. Marcel appears to be referring to Hume's discussion of personal identity. Hume is cited explicitly in the English translation of the text, but is not mentioned in the corresponding place in the French edition. See Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being: Vol. I: Reflection and Mystery, trans. G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), p. 61. Marcel's discussion of Empiricism is surprisingly superficial in the light of his association of Empiricism with the objectification that he criticizes at length. He does not deal with any Empiricist later than Hume, and his comments on Hume are too brief to amount to an adequate critical analysis.

[2] RM, p. 59.

[3] Throughout this criticism of Empiricism, Marcel bypasses a number of difficulties within his own argument. There is an initial confusion in his use of the word "consciousness," which seems to refer sometimes to the self, and sometimes to awareness. In addition, his discussion suggests mind-body dualism and presents a number of difficulties for a theory of self-consciousness. However, since Marcel's position here is related to his views on self-knowledge and participation, further discussion will be postponed until these views are presented in more detail.

exclusively from his interest in neo-Hegelian thought.[1] To untangle all the facets of the influence of Idealism on Marcel's philosophy is a task beyond the boundaries of this study. However, a few points of influence will be suggested to serve as the starting point for the discussion of Marcel's conception of the self.

As a student and subsequently, Marcel was exposed in particular to the works of F. H. Bradley and Josiah Royce. In Marcel's earliest journal entries, there are frequent references to Bradley. In the preface to his earliest writings, Marcel comments on the formative influence of Appearance and Reality on his work.[2]

Bradley's conception of the self is echoed at various points throughout these early writings of Marcel. One finds comments such as the following. "Le rôle du philosophe est de nous enseigner comme l'ont vu tous les grands penseurs, l'irréalité foncière de ce que nous sommes habitués à considérer comme notre nature."[3] Marcel suggests here that the self in its empirical manifestations is unreal, or in some way logically inconsistent. This in turn reflects Bradley's argument that the self is appearance, and as such, unintelligible.[4] However, in these early discussions Marcel does not pursue an analysis of the self in any detail,

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[1]The first book which Marcel published, the Journal métaphysique, is indicative of this interest. In particular, this is the case in regard to the entries dating from January 1, 1914, to September 15, 1915. However, the second part of the journal, containing entries to May 24, 1923, shows a shift away from Idealist concerns and categories. Gabriel Marcel, Journal métaphysique (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1935). Cited hereafter as JM.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, Fragments philosophiques: 1909-1914 (Louvain: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1961), p. 5. Cited hereafter as FP.

[3]FP, p. 17.

[4]F. H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), Ch. X.

being more interested in developing a critique of the conceptions of Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Experience.

The influence of Royce on Marcel is harder to trace than that of Bradley. While Marcel published an extended analysis of Royce's metaphysics, references to Royce in Marcel's other writings are infrequent.[1] Perhaps the closest parallel between Marcel and Royce is the common interest in a metaphysics of community or intersubjectivity. Both philosophers stress that individuality can only emerge in a social setting.

An additional source of Idealist influence on Marcel comes from Bergsonian philosophy.[2] Bergson's influence on Marcel is perhaps the most pervasive, primarily because Bergson's philosophy is not subject to many of the criticisms which Marcel directs against neo-Hegelian Idealists such as Bradley and Royce. Some of the points at which the ideas of Bergson and Marcel converge will be indicated in the course of this study.

Marcel frequently points out that the initial appeal that Idealism had for him was the very climate of abstraction which he was later to condemn. "Au plan des Idées j'avais la possibilité de m'établir, de me créer un chez-moi, par delà tous les contacts meurtrissants que nous inflige la vie quotidienne. Philosopher, ce fut donc sans doute pour moi

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[1]Gabriel Marcel, La métaphysique de Royce (Paris: Aubier, 1945). This work, which originally appeared in the Revue de métaphysique et de morale in 1917-1918, is largely expository. It is interesting to note that the phrase "mystery of being," which plays a considerable role in Marcel's thought, can be found in Royce. See Josiah Royce, The World and the Individual (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900), p. 294. The relationship between Marcel and Royce has been explored by Thelma Waydeen Taylor in "Gabriel Marcel and the Philosophy of Josiah Royce: An Existentialist's Debt to an American Idealist" (unpublished M.A. essay, Columbia University, 1956).

[2]It was to Bergson, along with William Hocking, that Marcel dedicated the Journal métaphysique.

dès l'origine transcender."[1] When Marcel first began to philosophize, the experience of transcendence seemed to him to be best understood in the framework of the Idealist tradition.

In spite of Marcel's indebtedness to the Idealists, it is his criticisms which set the stage for his own conception of the self. In retrospect he points out that experiences during and following the First World War completed his disillusionment with Idealism, a disillusionment which had begun with the discovery of the inadequacies of the Hegelian concept of Absolute Knowledge.[2] The resultant critique of Idealism does not appear in any one place in Marcel's work but can be derived from numerous scattered references. His quarrel with Idealist philosophies focuses around three points: the argument for an all-inclusive totality, dualism, and the necessity for abstraction. In the course of these criticisms it becomes evident that Marcel finds no Idealist conception of the self satisfactory--whether it be that of Kant, Hegel, Fichte or Bradley.

The concept of an all-inclusive totality or Absolute is represented for Marcel in Bradley's thought, in which there is an omnicomprehensive reality which "gathers in" all appearances.[3] Nothing can fall outside of Bradley's Absolute; it attempts total unification. Marcel takes issue

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[1]Gabriel Marcel, "Regard en arrière," dans Existentialisme chrétien: Gabriel Marcel, ed. Etienne Gilson (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1947), p. 294. Cited hereafter as RA.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 18-22, 36. Cited hereafter as EB.

[3]RM, p. 70. See Bradley, Appearance and Reality, Ch. XIII.

with this position mainly for its tendency to underplay the gaps and insufficiencies of experience. He argues that Bradley substitutes a picture of what man should be for what man actually is, and the result is a sacrifice of the "incompleteness" of experience.[1] To say that the real is one and self-consistent is to force the concrete and unforeseeable details of experience into the realm of the unreal or of non-Being.[2]

Marcel's criticism of Bradley extends to a rejection of any systematization or totalization. "Ce que ma démarche tendait en définitive à exclure c'était la notion d'une pensée qui definerait en quelque sorte objectivement la structure du réel et se regarderait dès lors comme qualifiée pour statuer sur lui."[3] His conception of philosophy as a "journey" of thought leads him to call into question the whole notion of an intelligible system. Philosophy, to Marcel, is not an edifice, nor can it be limited to a set of interlinked propositions. The deductive or dialectical approach to philosophical truths, in its attempt to make philosophy scientific, only distorts these truths.[4] Instead, philosophical meditations are essentially dramatic or musical. They are a series of "reconnaissances"--approaches to phenomena which thought cannot reach directly.[5]

This argument suggests that while Marcel rejects any view that the self is appearance and therefore unreal, he also refuses to consider the self as a sufficient unity. Since philosophical insights cannot be

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[1] EB, pp. 78, 96.

[2] RA, pp. 308-309.

[3] Ibid., p. 318.

[4] RI, pp. 23, 8.

[5] Gabriel Marcel, Homo viator: Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance (Paris: Aubier, 1945), pp. 5, 91. Cited hereafter as HV.

systematized, truths about the self cannot be made totally consistent. In addition, the self is misrepresented by the dualism which is an outcome of Idealism. On this ground Marcel criticizes the positions of both Kant and Fichte. Kant, according to Marcel, initiates the functional dualism of the empirical and transcendental self. Fichte then goes on to deduce the empirical self from the transcendental self, positing an "empirical self in general." The empirical self is thus "transcendentalized" into a universal principle.[1]

Marcel maintains that both positions destroy the unity of experience. To maintain a Kantian division between a contingent empirical self and a transcendental rational self, the philosopher must abstract from his empirical self. "En procédant de la sorte, je risque de m'évader dans ce qui est vraiment un 'nulle part', mais un nulle part que je traite abusivement comme un lieu privilégié, comme une sorte d'Olympe spirituel. Or, ne serait-ce pas justement contre l'idée d'un Olympe semblable que nous sommes tenus de prendre position le plus nettement possible?"[2] Furthermore, the transcendental self is a "fiction." No matter how much the philosopher tries to consider this self as pure subject he ends by treating it as an object. Yet paradoxically he denies it even the status of an object, refusing to attribute to it any determinate objective characteristics.[3]

Yet Fichte's "empirical self in general" is no improvement. It

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[1] RM, p. 58; HV, pp. 180-181; EB, p. 101.

[2] RM, p. 148.

[3] Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain (Paris: La Colombe, 1951), p. 68. Cited hereafter as HCH.

underplays the detail and individuality of experience. Since one must arrive at this empirical self through deduction from the transcendental self, he must abstract; and in so doing, he loses sight of what is significantly individual in the self. Marcel's criticism of Fichte at this juncture, reflects his general dissatisfaction with Idealism, in particular with its unwarranted abstraction from experience.[1]

Marcel finds in abstraction a dangerous "spirit," which alienates man from a sense of living realities. It substitutes ideas for individuals, and sacrifices existence for rational considerations. "L'existence apparaît dès lors comme surmontée--ou résorbée--ou peut-être simplement escamotée."[2] While abstraction has uses as a preliminary mental operation in philosophy, its function is abused when it comes to obscure the reality and destiny of the individual. Again, therefore, Marcel returns to the claim that Idealism cannot adequately account for the concrete and existential aspects of human experience.

Perhaps the most illuminating characterization of Marcel's relationship to Idealism could be drawn from a speech made by a character in one of his plays.

> Ma pensée s'était construit un palais, un palais de sable, je le comprends maintenant, mais où il lui semblait qu'elle pouvait vivre et subsister; ... Mais ce palais s'est écroulé; partout autour de moi j'en aperçois les décombres lamentables; la grève en est toute jonchée. Il me semblait être à l'abri des vents et de la marée, et

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[1]Marcel occasionally speaks of Schelling as well as Fichte in this context. Yet while he did some work as a student on Schelling, Marcel considers Schelling's influence on his own philosophy to be negligible. He argues that among the Existentialists, only Heidegger is significantly affected by Schelling's philosophy. See Gabriel Marcel, "Schelling fut-il précurseur de la philosophie de l'existence?" Revue de métaphysique et de morale, 62 (Janvier-Mars, 1957), 72-87.

[2]JM, p. 311. See also HCH, pp. 114-122, in which Marcel discusses the dangers of the spirit of abstraction in a social and political setting.

> voici que maintenant je suis au ras de la plage ouverte à tous les ouragons. ... C'est moi-même maintenant qu'il s'agit de défendre contre l'assaut de toutes les incertitudes.[1]

The collapse of the "sand castle" of Idealism had repercussions throughout Marcel's philosophy, not just on his conception of the self. He gave up his early plans to present a systematic philosophy and came to rely increasingly on the use of journal entries and short essays to convey his position.

The alternative to both Empiricism and Idealism is for Marcel an existential philosophy.[2] The existential philosopher is not merely a disinterested observer of reality; the personal data of his own life are relevant to his philosophizing. He has a stake in his ideas because his own existence forms part of his subject-matter. Insofar as it is a question of the self, this position leads the philosopher to focus on the concrete reality and individuality of the self. In practice this allows him to attend to specific detail, to what is happening to him in the present.

This existential realism, while emphasizing the concrete, is concerned as well with the possibilities of individual existence. Marcel maintains that he is particularly interested in the way in which present experience can be transfigured or transcended. "N'y avait-il pas un chemin ardu qui permettrait d'accéder à un empirisme supérieur, et de faire droit à cette exigence de l'individuel, et du concret que je portais en moi? En d'autres termes, l'expérience, loin d'être un tremplin, n'était-elle pas

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[1] *Le seuil invisible*, p. 334. "Le palais de sable," the play from which this quotation is taken, was written from August to September, 1913, at the time when Marcel initiated his criticisms of Idealism.

[2] However, because Marcel does not wish to be associated with the philosophy of Sartre, he prefers the designation "neo-Socratism" to "existentialism." See Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. xiii.

pour moi une terre promise?"[1] So while Marcel is a determined critic of Empiricism, his is a philosophy of experience. And although he rejects transcendental Idealism, his philosophy is one of transcendence. He maintains these positions by an expansion of the notions of experience and transcendence, and by an accompanying departure from prior conceptions of the self.

Traditionally philosophers have asked: what is the self? How can it be known? What is its ethical status? Marcel views these questions as unanswerable because they are raised in the wrong way. However, the problems which give rise to the questions are not meaningless. The questions need to be reformulated so that they do not obscure the problems and so that they can allow for more adequate answers. The question of what the self is, is divested of its objective connotation by Marcel and becomes: how is the self experienced? The topic of self-knowledge is converted into that of "participation." Finally, Marcel shifts the problem of the ethical status of the self into a question of the being of the self, in an attempt to merge ontological and ethical concerns.

The following discussion will explore the way in which Marcel poses and answers these questions about the self. It will try to indicate that Marcel's alleged emancipation from Idealist assumptions is less complete than he claims, and that because of his implicit Idealism, a number of his arguments cannot be maintained as they stand. Finally, it will turn to an examination of how some of Marcel's insights can be developed, when freed from their Idealist overtones.

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[1] RA, p. 295.

## B. The Self as Existential Indubitable

The self has a privileged philosophical status for Marcel; it is the "existential indubitable."[1] All inquiries into the nature of existence and being start from the philosopher's unquestioned assurance of his own existence. This initial assurance is not something that he reasons out or deduces; it is something felt as indubitably present. Marcel arrives at these conclusions by asking if there is any touchstone (repère) of existence which, if denied, would make all affirmations of existence unthinkable. Is there one existent which provides the starting-point for all judgments of existence? He argues that there is one such starting-point; it is the self. "Or cet indubitable existentiel ne peut justement être que moi en tant que je suis assuré d'exister."[2]

Minimally, Marcel's argument is that I can make no affirmations or judgments of existence unless I exist. However, if this is his only point, it scarcely warrants the time and emphasis which he gives it. It could be argued, though, that Marcel means that not only is the existence of the self necessary for any judgment or affirmation of existence; but also without the existence of the self it is meaningless to speak of the

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[1] RM, p. 103.

[2] RM, p. 103. Marcel goes on in this passage to say that while the phenomenological privileged existent is the self, the ontological privileged existent is God. In the English edition he adds that the phenomenological level is the level "of appearance and not reality, of manifestation and not ground." (Mystery of Being, I, p. 109.) However, this distinction obscures his position, for elsewhere he argues that the ontological indubitable is also the self. (FR, p. 39.)

existence of anything else or of existence per se. In this formulation, the suggestion is that existence is only meaningful when it is affirmed or made the object of a judgment.[1]

What is this self whose existence cannot be doubted? Marcel's terminology immediately suggests a debt to Descartes. However, Marcel denies any affinity between the two views. He objects to Descartes' cogito because it is concerned only with the subject of thought.[2] This is unsatisfactory first because it entails a separation of the thinking aspect of the self from the body. Cartesian dualism like Kantian dualism misrepresents the nature of the self, because the self is a unity.[3]

In addition, Descartes' position isolates the self from other selves. For Marcel, while the existence of the self is the starting point for philosophical inquiry, it does not exist alone. "Une semblable prise de position met immédiatement en relief le caractère essentiellement anti-cartésien de la métaphysique vers laquelle nous allons avoir à nous orienter. Il ne suffit pas de dire que c'est une métaphysique de l'être, c'est une métaphysique du nous sommes par opposition à une métaphysique du je pense."[4] The self can never be isolated from its "intersubjective

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[1]Marcel does not carry his argument to this point, possibly because it suggests solipsism, a position which he often denounces. See RM, p. 101; FR, p. 20.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique (Paris: J. Vrin, 1949), p. 54. Cited hereafter as MO.

[3]Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir (Paris: Aubier, 1935), p. 249. Cited hereafter as EA.

[4]FR, p. 12.

nexus." I do not exist outside of an interrelation with others.[1]

Furthermore, Marcel objects to Descartes' "attitude" towards the existence of the "I." Because Descartes thought he had conclusively affirmed existence, he proclaimed the "I am" tooforcefully. In Marcel's opinion, this affirmation, if made at all, should be uttered in a tone of humility, wonder and even fear.[2]

If the Cartesian view is unacceptable, what then is the self for Marcel? He first restricts the question to "what am I?" However, as it stands, this formulation gives no indication of the kind of answer which he would consider satisfactory. A statistical generalization is as legitimate an answer as a psychological case history. Does the question mean, as Marcel sometimes suggests, "what am I worth?" If so, it is a request for judgment.[3] Marcel does not, however, pursue this line of inquiry to any extent. Instead, he focuses on the problem of who is qualified to answer the question "what am I?"

There are, in Marcel's opinion, two alternatives. The answer can be given by another or by myself. But neither solution is satisfactory. Others are not qualified to tell me what I am, because they are invariably biased. For example, in choosing someone to tell me what I am, I am certain to influence the answer; for I am the one who decides whether the person is qualified or not. I may be counting on his friendship to gloss over

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[1]Marcel's metaphysics of the "we are" suggests not only Royce but also the work of G. H. Mead. While his approach is more scientific than Marcel's, Mead's conception of the self as a "social emergent" provides an interesting parallel to Marcel's theory of intersubjectivity. See George H. Mead, Mind, Self and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934, pp. 49, 135.

[2]FR, p. 34.

[3]RM, p. 164.

my less desirable traits. On the other hand, I may have selected him because I know that he will be excessively severe in his characterization.[1] Even if I generalize the other, and consider it to be society or a political institution, the question still cannot be adequately answered. For society or a political party is no less fallible than another person. If a party tells me what I am, it will most likely be trying to make me into something that I am not.[2]

Others cannot answer the question "what am I?" to Marcel's satisfaction, but neither can the questioner himself. Certainly if another person is biassed, I am even more likely to be. I will slant the answer towards the way I wish to see myself, ignoring what does not fit my self-image.

Marcel's argument, therefore, is that the question "what am I?" cannot be answered either by myself or by others, because of personal or institutional bias. However, his position needs to be clarified. It may be possible to recognize and eliminate subjective bias. Marcel is in fact claiming that it is not merely because of a slanted perspective that I, my friend or my political party cannot answer the question. The reason is that <u>any</u> objective characterization is inadequate because it is objective. Even if bias were eliminated, the characterization would distort the self; for all attempts to arrive at an objective answer result in self-contradiction.[3]

Marcel's defense of this position appears in his criticism of

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[1] <u>Loc. cit.</u>

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 166-167.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 164.

objective characterization. An objective characterization is not an answer to the question "what am I?" but to the question "what is he?"[1] The first question calls for penetration to the "interior" of the self. The second invites an objective answer in the form of an enumeration of predicates or properties. Whatever appears as the sum of these properties is not the "real" self.

It would appear, then, that for Marcel there are two ways of knowing. One is objective. The other, as yet unspecified, is a method which allows for a grasp of the immediacy and concreteness of that which is known. It is only by this second method that the "real" self is grasped. Facilitating the shift from the first to the second method is what Marcel calls secondary reflection. While primary reflection, the first way of knowing, proceeds by analysis and objectification, secondary reflection entails a shift in level. It is a refusal to accept the procedure and categories of an objective approach. "Disons tout à fait en gros qu'au lieu que la réflexion primaire tend à dissoudre l'unité qui lui est d'abord présentée, la réflexion seconde est essentiellement récupératrice, elle est une reconquête."[2] But secondary reflection is only a bridge to the second way of knowing. It is what makes the latter possible.

Marcel's theory of knowledge closely resembles that of Bergson. His "objective characterization" has all the traits of Bergson's relative knowledge, in which concepts placed beside each other only present the "shadow" of a reality.[3] In both cases concepts give an artificial

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[1] JM, p. 267.

[2] RM, pp. 97-98.

[3] Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T. E. Hulme (New York: The Library of Liberal Arts, 1955), p. 29.

presentation of the self. In addition, Marcel's second method of knowing has something in common with Bergson's absolute knowledge, in that the latter also allows for an interior grasp of the "real" self.

If the question "what am I?" is not a request for objective characterization, how is it to be interpreted? Marcel makes two proposals. One is that for the question to be meaningful, it must be transformed into an appeal or invocation. This appeal is supra-empirical, an appeal to the Absolute Other.[1] Marcel offers an example from one of his plays to clarify this point.[2] In this play a pastor's belief is threatened by a series of family misfortunes. Under these circumstances, the hero loses all sense of himself and is no longer able to direct the question "what am I?" to himself or to others. The outcome is that the question becomes transformed into an appeal to God.[3]

This transformation of the question "what am I?" into an appeal takes the answer out of the control of the questioner. However, Marcel works more frequently from a less extreme position. The question does allow for an answer--an answer which the questioner can himself provide. In giving this answer, he must take full account of the fact that the self is an "opaque" datum. I cannot distance from myself when I try to discover what I am. The question encroaches on the very conditions which permit me to pose it.[4] In order that I even raise the question, I must presuppose my own existence. At first this seems to be an insoluble problem. When I

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[1] RI, p. 189; RM, p. 167.

[2] Gabriel Marcel, Un homme de Dieu (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1950).

[3] RM, pp. 168-169.

[4] RI, p. 189.

am led to affirm my existence, I find that I cannot legitimately make this affirmation. I am implicated in an endless regression of questions about my existence. There is no initial criterion by which I can establish this existence.[1]

Marcel is raising here a persistent problem of self-knowledge, the problem which Gilbert Ryle calls that of the "systematic elusiveness" of the self.[2] In epistemologies after Descartes, this problem has proven a repeated stumbling block to a coherent theory of the self. Complete self-knowledge appears impossible for the reason that the self as knower or subject can never be included in the self as known object. The subject-object division, which can be used in most knowing situations, becomes unworkable when it is the self that is to be known. Marcel points out, "Je ne puis me connaître ... sans dépasser ce moi donné que je prétends connaître, et ce dépassement apparaît comme caractéristique de la conscience."[3]

Marcel works on this problem without reference to historical positions or to contemporary discussions. He starts by taking it out of the epistemological setting, claiming that the subject-object distinction which encumbers theories of knowledge is a major source of the difficulty. The subject-object division entails that for the self to be known, it must be an object. To avoid what Marcel views as the resultant paradox, the question "what am I?" should not be considered part of an attempt to <u>know</u> the self. The self cannot be an object of knowledge.[4]

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[1] <u>MO</u>, p. 56.

[2] Gilbert Ryle, <u>The Concept of Mind</u> (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1949), pp. 195-198.

[3] <u>RM</u>, p. 61.

[4] Marcel departs here from the Bergsonian position by rejecting epistemological terminology. While Bergson's "absolute knowledge" is still knowledge, Marcel's second method of "knowing" turns out not to be knowledge at all. A critical discussion of this view and of Marcel's conceptions of mystery and participation is presented in the second section of Chapter V, <u>infra</u>.

Instead, the self is a "mystery." Marcel, throughout his writings, distinguishes between a problem and a mystery. A problem is a philosophical difficulty which is presented objectively to the inquirer. It can be analyzed; and it can, by appropriate techniques, be resolved. A mystery, on the other hand, is a problem which encroaches on its own data. It invades these data; and in so doing, it goes beyond itself as simple problem.[1] The problem raised by the question "what am I?" becomes a mystery because the questioner's existence "invades" that which he considers.

The "systematic elusiveness" of the self, then, is not for Marcel an epistemological paradox which can be resolved by the introduction of more comprehensive categories or theories. To regard it as such is to remain on the level of the problematical. Categories and theories only serve to distance the inquirer from his subject-matter. This distance is impossible when the subject-matter is the self, for the inquirer cannot avoid being engaged.[2] Because the self is a mystery, the answer to the question "what am I?" is not objective, and it does not provide self-knowledge. The answer will be "une affirmation ... dont je serais le siège plutôt que je n'en serais le sujet."[3] But what is present in an "affirmation" of the self which distinguishes it from knowledge of the self? When I affirm myself, am I not reintroducing the subject-object division? Insofar as Marcel provides an answer to these questions, it can be found in his theory of participation. The self is not an object which I know; it is a

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[1] MO, p. 57. The word "mystery" has connotations which are unfortunate, and Marcel is careful to emphasize that he is referring neither to an insoluble problem nor to the unknowable. See EB, p. 82; EA, p. 170.

[2] EA, p. 169.

[3] MO, p. 56.

"presence" in which I participate.

To participate in something is to share, take part in, or partake of it.[1] Participation takes place "within" the real; it is an "engagement."[2] But if I participate in something, the "something" again suggests an object to which I, the subject, relate. Marcel, however, insists that any objective connotation of the words must be avoided. The words and the structure of the sentence "I participate in something" are misleading insofar as they suggest the existence of two terms. The experience which Marcel is describing is without terms. Because of the limits of language the experience can only be suggested.

An example of participation can be drawn from Marcel's occasional remarks about music. In commenting on his attempt to move away from an Idealist framework, he says, "It became necessary to break a path by which I could reflectively rejoin what had been given me more or less immediately in dramatic experience or in musical intuition."[3] Marcel's path away from Idealism leads to a theory of participation. What he discovers therefore

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[1]Mystery of Being, I, p. 137. This definition does not appear in the corresponding place in the French text. In his earlier writings Marcel analyzes participation in a religious context, focusing mainly on its relation to faith. (FP, p. 93.) Later, however, he uses the concept of participation to explain an individual's relationship to his body and to others. (RM, Ch. VI, IX.) Commentators are not in agreement in their interpretations of this concept. The two most detailed analyses of it concur in positing three levels of participation in Marcel, but disagree on the distinguishing features of the three levels. See Kenneth T. Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), p. xi; and Lê Thành Trí, L'idée de la participation chez Gabriel Marcel: Superphénomenologie d'une intersubjectivité existentielle (Fribourg: Thèse présentée à la faculté des lettres de l'université de Fribourg, 1959), pp. 54-55.

[2]EA, p. 25; RM, p. 138.

[3]EB, p. 21. Marcel does not develop in any detail the notion that aesthetic experience is a model for participatory experience. The use here of musical experience to clarify and enlarge upon his theory of participation, however, seems justified because of the similarity in the language he employs in both cases.

in his theory of participation is something that he has always known in his experiences with music.

What then is characteristic of these musical experiences? In a journal entry in Etre et avoir, Marcel notes, "Je viens de jouer longuement du Brahms, des sonates pour piano que je ne connaissais pas. Elles resteront toujours associées pour moi à ces moments inoubliables. Comment retenir ce sentiment d'envahissement, d'absolue sécurité, d'enveloppement aussi?"[1] Elsewhere he adds, "One was beyond knowledge and yet it was as if one breathed a certainty which went infinitely beyond the limits of a simple, individual emotion deriving from a particular temperament or sensitivity. The greatest musical works seemed to invoke directly a certain communion."[2] The world of music is one where everything communicates, where everything is connected.[3]

The participation that takes place in musical experiences, therefore, is neither knowledge nor merely a personal emotion. There is "communication" in which one goes "beyond" himself and experiences "unforgettable" moments of envelopment and union. But for there to be communication, there must be something with which one communicates. For Marcel, that which completes such experiences of communication is a "presence." In the musical experiences which he describes, the music becomes a presence for the participator. In fact, every artist must experience a presence before he can create. "Si la création esthétique est concevable, ce ne peut être qu'à partir d'une certaine présence du monde à l'artiste;

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[1] EA, pp. 24-25.

[2] EB, p. 26.

[3] FR, p. 18.

présence au coeur et à l'intelligence, présence à l'être même."[1]

A presence is in no way an object. The distinguishing feature of participation in a presence is that the experience transcends opposition. The participator and the music, for example, cannot be separated. While I may speak of myself as distinct from the music, I in fact transcend that duality and experience union with the music. But it cannot be said that I am the music. I am united with it, yet not identical to it. Any attempt to objectify that in which I participate destroys its character as a presence. "La présence ... est plus que l'objet, elle le déborde en tous sens."[2]

Drawing on the musical analogy, one can say that the self is a presence--a reality with which I set up a communicative relationship. This relationship is not objective, nor is it subjective. It is "intersubjective." "Ma présence à moi-même n'est pas une donnée qui aille de soi; elle est au contraire sujette à éclipse, il faut toujours la reconquérir."[3] Again, as is the case with the music, any opposition between the "I" and the presence is transcended.

Marcel's discussion suggests that there are different kinds of presence. I participate in presences which are not the self. What therefore are the distinguishing features of the self as presence? On this point, Marcel's argument becomes increasingly difficult to trace. He offers, however, two suggestions which bear on the question. The first is that in experiencing the self as a presence, I have an "exclamatory consciousness" of the self. "L'existant comme indubitable me semble lié à

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[1] MO, p. 79.

[2] Loc. cit.

[3] HV, p. 173. Marcel suggests in this passage that the self in which I participate is a self which has been achieved or created. This concept is developed in detail in Chapter IV, infra.

une conscience exclamative de soi. ... Observons surtout que le caractère massif de cette existence, de cet indubitable ne saurait être trop souligné."[1]

Marcel comments only briefly on this "exclamatory" experience, comparing it to the immediacy of a child's self-awareness. He seems to use it to stress the affective dimension to participation in the self. I have a feeling of myself--a feeling which is affirmative but to a large extent indescribable. However, it could be argued that such a feeling would not necessarily distinguish the self as presence from any other kind of presence. The feeling could equally accompany the participation in a musical work or the experience of the presence of another person.

However, a second suggestion made by Marcel introduces an additional element to participation in the self. The "exclamatory consciousness" of the self is allied to a feeling of the body. In fact, on one occasion, Marcel speaks of the body as the existential indubitable rather than the self.[2] This suggests not only that the body is a presence as well as the self, but also that there is a complex relationship between the self and the body.[3]

The existence of the self, therefore, is for Marcel the starting point of philosophical research. The self, however, is not an object. Upon

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[1]RM, pp. 106-107. The use of the word "consciousness" suggests the very epistemological terminology that Marcel is trying to avoid. However, he would probably contend that he is faced with the limits of a conventional vocabulary, associated with traditional epistemological distinctions. In cases where he does use such language, he is giving the words a participatory connotation.

[2]RI, p. 28.

[3]Since this topic is related to Marcel's analysis and criticism of objective conceptions of the body, it will be developed in Chapter II, infra.

secondary reflection, the philosopher shifts from the language of epistemology to that of participation. "La connaissance se suspend à un mode de participation dont une épistémologie quelle qu'elle soit ne peut espérer rendre compte parce qu'elle-même le suppose."[1] While knowledge of the self entails division, participation in the self allows for unity. Also this participation in the self yields an "exclamatory" consciousness of a presence which is to some extent bodily. While a number of these terms are obscure, Marcel would argue that obscurity is an inevitable result of a position which is non-objective.

## C. A Fundamental Conflict

Marcel bases his theory of participation in large part upon a critique of views which objectify the self. However, the grounds for his refusal to consider the self objectively are not immediately clear. Is an objective answer to the question "what am I?" unacceptable because the question cannot be answered objectively? If this is the case, it is impossible for the self to be an object. On the other hand, Marcel often suggests that it is possible to objectify the self, but such an approach is limiting and inadequate.

These two views occur throughout Marcel's conception of the self and appear to be in conflict.[2] The first view implicitly posits what will

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[1]MO, p. 57.

[2]While this conflict is not a necessary result of a theory of participation, it is a result of the theory as presented by Marcel. The extent to which the conflict can be resolved by a modification and development of the theory of participation is discussed in the final chapter of this study.

be called here an "essential" self; the second posits a "concrete" self.[1] The assumptions which form the basis for the "essential" self are in large part Idealistic. The "essential" self has only one manifestation; it is only when it is fully realized. Any stage short of the realized self cannot be considered the self. Such a stage is either a pseudo-self or a "moment" in the dialectic of self-realization. The realized self may subsist in some fashion along with the pseudo-selves, but the latter must be eliminated or transcended before this self emerges.

The assumptions which go to make up the "concrete" self do not allow for pseudo-selves. From this point of view, the self has a wide variety of manifestations. Regardless of the nature of my experience, I am still a self. While the "essential" self cannot change, the "concrete" self can. Growth, in terms of the former, is the process of allowing the self to become manifest; while for the latter, it is an alteration in the actual nature of the self.

These two sets of assumptions about the self conflict for a number of reasons. If the "essential" self only exists when it is fully realized, I am not a self prior to complete realization. This is directly opposed to the "concrete" assumption that a self is present equally whether my experience is profound or trivial. The "essential" self is incapable of change; the "concrete" self is always changing. Finally, the conception of the "essential" self, if developed, merges ontological and ethical concerns, forming a necessary link between my being and my value, a link

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[1]The distinction between an "essential" and a "concrete" self is my own, not Marcel's. It is introduced to provide a simple means of referring to the two views in question. The terminology is not entirely satisfactory, because the words "essential" and "concrete" have a different meaning for Marcel. To avoid confusion, my own use of the words will be indicated by their enclosure in quotation marks.

which need not be present in the "concrete" self.

This conflict is mirrored in Marcel's discussion of the correct philosophical approach to the self. When he assumes the "essential" self, he maintains that an objective approach is impossible--a contradiction in terms. Because the self cannot be an object, it is meaningless to speak of "objectification of the self." When Marcel operates from this viewpoint, his critique of the objective approach to the self is based on his contention that this approach manifests a total misunderstanding of the nature of the self.

However, when Marcel works from the assumptions making up the "concrete" self, his arguments suggest that a variety of methods of understanding the self are available. The objective approach is possible, and there is no contradiction in viewing the self as an object. In fact it is on the very possibility of the self's being an object that Marcel bases his criticisms of "destructive" attitudes towards the self.

Marcel does not directly acknowledge these two views of the self, nor does he develop either one of them into a complete theory of self. Instead, he combines them into a single loosely-knit conception; and he alternates frequently in his discussion from one view to the other. For purposes of convenience, this formulation of the two views is used in the subsequent chapters to clarify what appear to be inexplicable shifts in Marcel's arguments.

# CHAPTER II

## THE SELF AS OBJECT AND THE ONTOLOGICAL LACK

The first section of this chapter deals with Marcel's formulation and criticisms of objective characterizations of the self. The second section presents his analysis of a lack or deficiency in the self. While Marcel frequently discusses these two topics in conjunction, a division will be maintained here on the grounds that objectification is primarily a method, while the ontological lack is a state or condition of the self.

There is, however, as Marcel points out, a relationship between the method of objectification and the experience of a lack in the self. The approach which a philosopher uses to investigate the self is influenced by his own experience, particularly if the concreteness and immediacy of experience is considered the starting point of philosophical inquiry. The reverse is also the case. The method used can influence the actual content of experience, since the way in which the philosopher considers the self becomes one facet of what he is.

For example, the more I consider my past to be a static or immobile datum, the more this past may become in fact a weight or burden to me. My future will then present itself as accomplished in advance, even contaminated by the past. Marcel suggests that life can literally be stopped by such an immobilizing representation of the past and the future.[1] While Marcel does not make it explicit, this influence of philosophical method on the self is present only if the "concrete" self, with its many manifestations, is assumed. For the interaction of philosophical method with the actual state of the self requires that the self can be degraded or "impoverished" yet

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[1] RI, pp. 73-74.

still be the self. This cannot be the case if the "essential" self is assumed, since it could not become degraded by an objective approach without losing its identity as the self.

## A. Objective Conceptions of the Self

When the self is approached objectively, it is observed as if from a distance. According to Marcel, objectification takes many forms. The self can be manipulated as though it were a tool. It can be represented in terms of what it has in common with other objects, functioning as a member of a class or series.[1] Objective conceptions of the self ignore its uniqueness, and transform it into a non-individual datum--one object among a host of others. The identity provided by the data on a questionnaire, or that which appears when the self is the object of scientific calculations or statistical studies are examples of objectification.

Marcel contends that the philosopher who views the self in this fashion approaches it in the role of a scientist. While he may be unaware of the resemblance, he, like the scientist, works with a phenomenon which he isolates and represents. He places the self before him; and with the scientist's supposed objectivity, he seeks to discover its origin and conditions. The sentient, receptive and participatory facets of the self become insignificant. The philosopher is a specialized technician, concerned only with the progressive complexities of the phenomenon in question.[2] The problems he encounters are largely practical, since he views the self as a passive object of scientific investigation.

The self, considered objectively, takes on the character of a machine, studied by an objective spectator. Marcel uses the example of

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[1] RM, pp. 141-142.

[2] Ibid., pp. 135-137.

a complex optical or recording apparatus.[1] The parts of such an apparatus are in a sense exterior to the whole. Or, in Bergson's terms, what the observer discovers are elements, not parts.[2] In fact, the whole of this machine self has no different an existential status than any of its elements. It is, in effect, a large element.

When the philosopher views the self as a machine, his own role becomes that of a spectator. Marcel uses the concept of "inspection" to indicate the attitude most directly opposed to participation. As a spectator, the philosopher is present, but not involved; curious, but not actively engaged in the spectacle.[3] The spectacle, which in this case is the self, can be studied for utilitarian reasons, in order to understand its causes, for purposes of entertainment or in an attempt to discover ways in which it can be manipulated. But whatever his motive, the philosopher-spectator always remains apart from the self.

Marcel's criticisms of objective conceptions of the self take two directions, depending on whether he assumes the "essential" or the "concrete" self. When he works from the conception of the "essential" self, he argues that the scientific or spectator approach to the self is impossible. It cannot be applied to the self at all, since there is only one self and this self is not an object. The philosopher cannot place himself

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[1] Ibid., p. 143.

[2] In the Introduction to Metaphysics, Bergson speaks of "the operation by which the psychologist extracts a single mental state from the whole personality. This isolated psychical state is hardly anything but a sketch, the commencement of an artificial reconstruction. . . . It is not a part, but an element. It has not been obtained by a natural dismemberment, but by analysis." pp. 32-33.

[3] RM, pp. 138-139.

outside of the self.[1] "C'est ainsi que le spectateur est profondément infidèle à sa propre réalité lorsqu'il se pense lui-même comme appareil optique."[2] The machine-like phenomenon which he calls the self is a substitute having none of the qualities of the real self. Thus even to speak of the objectification of the self entails contradiction.

At the same time, however, Marcel introduces a set of less extreme criticisms of objective conceptions of the self. Assuming the "concrete" self, he argues that while objective characterizations of the self are possible, they degrade the self. There is nothing contradictory in considering my self as a mechanism.[3] I am perfectly able to "externalize" myself as spectator and observe my self.[4] These approaches are unsatisfactory not because they are impossible or self-contradictory, but because they do not clarify the subjective and immediate aspects of the self.

Marcel's criticisms of objective approaches to the self become more specific when he discusses the self in relation to the body and the past. In his analyses of the self Marcel often turns to a discussion of the body, claiming that incarnation, or the fact of being a body in the world, is the most fundamental characteristic of a person's situation. When the philosopher tries to analyze the self, he finds that he is unable to dissociate his awareness of the self as existing, from his awareness of the self as incarnate.[5] "Ceci revient à dire qu'on s'engage dans

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[1] EA, p. 23.

[2] RM, p. 143.

[3] HV, p. 29.

[4] PI, p. 36.

[5] EA, p. 9.

l'abstraction pure aussitôt qu' ... on tente de rompre le nexus qui m'unit à l'univers--nexus de ma présence au monde, mon corps n'étant que ce nexus rendu manifeste."[1] Because the self and the body are so closely related, objective conceptions of the self often turn out to be objective conceptions of the body.

In objectifying my body, I refuse to consider it my body. Instead it is a body, on a par with all other objects. I abstract myself from it, disincarnating myself. My body becomes a contingent object, which could just as well occupy one situation as another.[2] Marcel offers two examples of objective dissociation from the body. One is the body considered as a possession; the other is the body viewed as an instrument. The phrase "my body" particularly lends itself to the interpretation of the body as something had or possessed. I claim, care for, and control my body just as I do a possession. While in some situations, such as that of extreme sickness, this is not the case, for the most part my relation to my body is similar to my relation to anything that I own.[3]

If my body is considered a possession, I necessarily approach it as an object, for that which I possess is always exterior to myself. It is something of which I can dispose. "Dans tout avoir-possession il semble bien qu'il y ait un certain contenu; ... un certain quid rapporté à un certain qui traité comme centre d'inhérence ou d'appréhension."[4] This quid

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[1]RI, p. 32.

[2]RM, p. 107; RI, pp. 31-33.

[3]RM, pp. 111-112.

[4]EA, p. 230.

is an object, on a different level from that of the qui. The qui is transcendent, capable of isolating and "exposing" the objective quid.

The body is also conceived objectively when it is viewed as an instrument. Like other possessions, an instrument is an object, but it has a unique function. An instrument, according to Marcel, is an artificial means of extending, developing or reinforcing a pre-existing power possessed by its user.[1] If I use a microscope as an instrument, I extend my power of sight. My body can be viewed as just such an extension, applied to different powers.

The susceptibility of the body to objective conceptions is encouraged both by language and scientific preoccupations. For Marcel the paradigm of the distortion caused by objectification can be found in mechanistic conceptions of sensation. Just as an analysis of the self often merges with a discussion of the body, so the philosophical concern with the body leads to a study of sensation. If a philosopher conceives of the body as an object, he must grant that the body is an object of sensation like any other object. Sensation, therefore, in its own right becomes subject to objectification.

The metaphor which Marcel uses to characterize the objective view of sensation is that of sending, receiving and translating a message. The message is divided into three parts: a transmitter, the transmission and a receiver. The receiver in turn has the two functions of passively receiving the message and actively translating it. Finally, there are three components of the translation: the preliminary untranslated datum, the activity of translating, then the resulting translated "text." The activity of translating requires the substitution of one group of data for another,

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[1] RM, p. 115; RI, p. 29.

with the help of a code or a "dictionary."[1]

Working with this schema of a translated message, Marcel shows how it objectifies sensation. The transmitter of the message is some unknown, unconscious object in space, something "from outside." It is a purely physical event. The transmission of the message is also a phenomenon of physical conditions, a disturbance in the atmosphere. Finally, the receiver in the message model, the sentient individual, appears as a highly sensitive material apparatus which records the atmospheric disturbance.[2]

The translation of this disturbance is made by the sentient receiving apparatus or self, which works with the preliminary untranslated datum. According to Marcel the datum must be either a pre-sensory event or an unconscious sensation. This datum is not sensed, however, until it is translated. By active use of his sensory apparatus the sentient subject transcribes the disturbance into a sensory language. The resulting translation or "text" is the sensation itself.[3]

If the translation were from one language to another, the code would be a dictionary, and the translator would substitute one set of words for another. It would be necessary that the two sets have something in common, for example, denotation or sentence structure. Therefore, for the metaphor of translation to be applicable to sensation, there must be two corresponding sets of data--the two "languages." Marcel supplies these in the form of the recorded physical disturbance and the final sensation. However, he does not indicate what in sensation corresponds to the code or

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[1] RM, p. 123.

[2] RM, pp. 121-123; RI, pp. 37-38.

[3] RM, pp. 121-123.

dictionary which enables the translation to take place. It could be that the code involves memory or habit, based on some form of learning. Thus if as receptor, I translate the disturbance transmitted to my ears as a Beethoven symphony, my code is made up of my memory of the symphony from prior hearings, and habits of association which allow me to link the present sensations to past ones.

The objective model of sensation, as thus presented, is somewhat awkward, particularly in the positing of a receiver which passively receives a disturbance and then actively translates it. However, it is not introduced by Marcel to instigate a discussion of sensation per se. He is more interested in using it as the focus of his attack on the whole notion of an objective conception of the self. All of the topics discussed--the self as spectator, the body as possession and instrument, and sensation as a message--have in common the fact that they are based on the assumption that the philosopher can treat the self as an object. It is against this assumption, above all, that Marcel levels his critical attack.

From one point of view, that of the "essential" self, objective conceptions of the body and sensation are impossible, in the same way that a spectator approach to the self is impossible. My body cannot be given to me as an object; disincarnation is excluded by my very structure.[1] Because my body cannot be depersonalized, it is impossible to treat it as an instrument.[2] Similarly sensation cannot be conceived as a message, because it is immediate and non-objective.

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[1] EA, p. 158; PI, p. 31.

[2] RI, p. 36.

In spite of these claims, Marcel develops his criticisms of the objective conceptions of the body and sensation largely from the point of view of the "concrete" self. That is, I am able to posit my body as something exterior to myself much as I might see myself in a mirror.[1] In fact, an objective approach is not only possible but on occasion necessary. "Il est d'autre part évident, ... que ma condition d'être incarné implique la possibilité pour moi-même de considérer mon propre corps comme je considérerais tout autre corps, n'importe quel corps. Et il est certainement tout à fait essentiel qu'il puisse en être ainsi."[2]

Considering the objective conceptions of the self to be possible, Marcel finds them to be inadequate primarily because they lead the philosopher into dualism and infinite regression. Dualism results when the body is objectified as a possession, because the "I" that owns the possession becomes separated from the body. This inevitable dissociation converts the body and the "I" into things, between which there must be some determinate relationship.[3]

Infinite regression results when the body is considered an instrument. If an instrument is defined as that which extends the power of the self and if the body is inseparable from the self, one is forced to say that the body extends the power of the body. This leads to an endless regression of bodies.[4] In fact it is just because an instrument is always independent of its user or the power it extends, that the body cannot be an instrument. There can be no separation of the self and the body.

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[1] Ibid., p. 34.

[2] RM, p. 120.

[3] Ibid., pp. 108-109.

[4] Ibid., p. 116.

The same problem appears in the objective model of sensation. Sensation cannot be assimilated to a message because any message presupposes a sensation to start with, just as the instrumentalist view of the body always presupposes the body. The message model of sensation thus becomes circular. While it is meaningful to say that a translator works with untranslated material, the extension to sensation shows the analogy to be faulty. The sentient being never works with unsensed data. He cannot receive a message and then set his senses to work on it because sensation is the means by which the message is received. To argue for an initial unsensed datum would be to posit a non-given given. Even if there were such a datum, there would be no way of verifying its existence; for no one would be aware of it. Marcel adds that the hypothesis of unconscious sensations does not solve the problem. They too would have to be treated as messages and would be subject to the same circularity.[1]

There are, then, internal difficulties within objective conceptions of the body and sensation. However, Marcel's criticism of objectification of the self extends beyond pointing out internal inconsistencies. The emphasis of these inconsistencies serves primarily to lead into his basic argument that objective approaches are misleading because they give no indication of the nature of one's sense of self. A dualistic approach is inadequate because I do not experience myself as split into two aspects. The body cannot be viewed as an instrument because I feel no gap between myself and my body. Finally, sensation is not a message because the feeling of the body is immediate, not mediated.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 124.

[2] Ibid., pp. 124-125.

This argument from the "feeling" of the self is expanded in Marcel's criticisms of objective conceptions of the past. Like my body, my past can be seen as an object. I can identify my past with what I narrate, with what I record in a journal or with the sum of my acts or my works. In all these representations I detach myself from my past just as I detach myself from my body, when it is thought of as a possession. My life is depersonalized--converted into a succession of images. I introduce an objective identity, and my past becomes an "it."[1]

There are a number of possible variations on this "it." Objectified, my past can be subject-matter for a chronology, a collection of depersonalized events, or a limited datum, occupying an interval between two dates. All that has happened to me makes up a collected whole, an alignment of events which succeed each other in time. "On peut ici évoquer un journal ... où tout est noté scrupuleusement, où tout est mis sur le même plan."[2] My past becomes a "socialized path" which can be travelled by anyone who wishes to follow it.[3]

It is in this objectification of the past that Marcel finds the most obvious distortion of the self. He argues that the attempts to consider the past as an object all entail abridgment and schematic totalization. Inevitably, if I examine my past I select from it aspects which seem to me to be significant in the light of present feelings or events. My past remains relative to my reading of it or to the mode of attention I focus on it. Marcel uses the example of statements about one's childhood.

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[1] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

[2] PI, p. 43.

[3] Ibid., p. 50.

The simple comment that I was sad as a child can spread an interpretative coloring over a childhood which at the time I did not experience as sad. My comment is made in the light of what I have since learned and experienced. The bias of present consciousness and disposition intrudes on the original event.[1] If I am discouraged, my past appears quite different from what it seems when I am in good spirits.

In addition, any attempt to recover the past as an object distorts the past because it attempts to juxtapose that which cannot be juxtaposed, converting succession into simultaneity. Here Marcel presents a Bergsonian argument, claiming that the incidents of the past cannot be added up in consciousness without a transformation of their original nature. These incidents are lived gradually. As soon as they are represented as simultaneous, they lose their character.[2] In Bergson's terminology, if past events are counted, they must be separated, set side by side, and stripped of their qualitative aspects. Duration is converted into a series of simultaneities.[3] Therefore, objectification gives the past a form and content which it did not originally have. It crystallizes events which are "fluid," and it totalizes these events in an impossible attempt to equate the past with the sum of its aspects or of perspectives upon it.[4]

Throughout this discussion Marcel presupposes that there is a means of recovering the past without bias, and that this means is participation. The understanding which results from participation provides the

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[1] RM, p. 170. Marcel's argument that all considerations of the past entail distortion raises a number of problems which will be discussed in the first part of Chapter V, infra.

[2] PI, pp. 43-44.

[3] Henri Bergson, Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness, trans. F. L. Pogson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 85, 87, 104, 108, 120.

[4] PI, pp. 46, 49.

standards by which Marcel judges non-participatory approaches as inadequate. Participation alone can allow for the non-simultaneous and "fluid" character of past events, since it does not attempt to enumerate these events or to juxtapose "aspects" of past experience.

While the past and the body are distorted by objectification, both can be understood if they are considered to be presences. Participation in each case yields a feeling of "subjective identity"--a feeling which is lost in objective conceptions of the body and the past.[1] This feeling is the experience I have of being my body and my past, not of being set over against them. This experience is not one of relations, because relation necessitates objective components. Nor does my participation in my body and my past present a "content of thought." "Tout contenu donne lieu à des médiations et n'est même contenu que par ces médiations."[2]

Marcel's multiplication of terms to express his meaning gives rise to a number of questions. Is participation the same as feeling? Is there a difference between my "subjective identity" and the self as presence? Finally, what is the relationship between the body, the past, and the self? The first question is answered by Marcel in the negative. Participation and feeling are not identical. "Le sentir ne peut être pensé que comme mode de participation, mais ... la participation excède

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[1] RM, p. 203. Marcel's use of "subjective" in this context raises a difficulty. Elsewhere he argues that the subject-object division must be eliminated. The confusion arises because he shifts the meaning of "subject." In the phrase "subjective identity" Marcel evidently is not referring to one aspect of the knowing relation, but to the self per se.

[2] RM, p. 127.

considérablement les limites du sentir."[1]

The "limits" of feeling, however, are not specified by Marcel. It is possible that he is referring to a relationship between feeling and sensation. While sensation is participatory, it is only one kind of participation. Thus insofar as feeling includes sensations, it too is only one mode of participation. The view that participation has modes also allows for a distinction between participation in the body and participation in the past. Participation in the body is affective, and includes a distinctive sensory component. Participation in the past, on the other hand, is mnemonic. If Marcel were to develop this point, he might contend that like feeling, memory is non-relational and non-objective. In remembering my past I communicate with a presence which cannot be "known" or mediated.[2]

Is the "subjective identity" which I experience upon participation identical to my experience of the self as a presence? Marcel often speaks of the two experiences interchangeably. If they are identical, when I participate in my body and my past, I am participating in my self. This in turn raises the question of how the body, the past, and the self are distinguished. Marcel deals with this question primarily in terms of the body. If I participate in my body, I am led to say "I am my body." But this statement must not be considered a materialistic affirmation. Instead, Marcel argues, it is a negative judgment. It is a denial of any unknown factor which is related to the body--any disembodied "I."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 141.

[2]That Marcel's thought could be developed in this direction is indicated by his interest in the works of Proust. His frequent references to Proust stress the latter's attempt to recover the past as a presence. See, for example, RM, pp. 170-171.

[3]RI, p. 30.

One aspect of the body that appears to militate against Marcel's argument is the possibility of suicide. If I can dispose of my body, is it not true that my body is a possession or an object and that "I" and "my body" are separate? Marcel denies that the possibility of self-destruction entails that the body be a possession. In fact, he claims that it is further evidence for the unity of self and body. For the disposing of the body immediately results in the impossibility of disposing of it.[1] There never is a gap between the "I" and the body. "Plus j'ai réalisé une intimité effective et profonde avec moi-même, plus il y a lieu de juger sujette à caution et même absurde la représentation que je me forme de moi-même comme d'un objet qu'il seait en mon pouvoir de mettre définitivement hors d'usage."[2]

In fact, my relation to my body is not modelled after my relation to the things that I possess and can dispose of. Instead, all my experiences of possession obscurely mirror my experience of my body. My relation to my body is prior in time and importance to all other experiences of relation. The other experiences are felt to be an extension of my experience of my body. When my possessions are threatened, I have a feeling similar to that which I have when my body is threatened. I strive to make my possessions one with myself in the same way that my body is one with myself.[3]

In this argument Marcel seems to be contradicting the position just presented and saying that the body is some kind of privileged possession. He speaks of a relation to the body, yet has claimed that

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[1] EA, p. 120.

[2] Ibid., p. 200.

[3] RM, pp. 113-114.

subjective identity excludes relations. The difficulty can be partially eliminated by considering Marcel to be saying something about possessions rather than about the body. It is not that my body is a privileged possession, but rather that my relation to my possessions is often such that I want to defy their nature and make them more than possessions. I try to make them one with myself. Thus my sense of my body is not strictly a model for my experiences of possession. This only happens when I wish my relation to my possessions to be other than it is.

To say "I am my body" or "I am my past" is not to say that I am only my body or my past. Marcel points out, for example, that while I participate in my body, I am more than my body.[1] This must not be interpreted as meaning that the self is a totality which is quantitatively greater than any one of its parts. I am more than my body or my past in the same sense that participation is more than feeling or memory. It could be argued that the body and the past are modes of the self just as feeling and memory are modes of participation.

For the self to be distinguished from the body or the past it becomes necessary to determine the unique features of the self as a presence. What makes the self what it is? Why does Marcel consider it more inclusive than either the body or the past? His answers to these questions are not direct. Instead, they are implicit in his analysis of self-realization. The self in which I participate is the realized self. And in order to understand the nature of the realized self, one must first know what it is not.

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[1] JM, p. 268.

## B. The Ontological Lack

Much of an individual's life is only half lived. Seldom are more than a fraction of his potentialities realized. According to Marcel, this is an actual lack in the self, influenced in part by objective conceptions of the self, but stemming from a variety of other causes as well. In one argument, Marcel claims that it is a necessary aspect of the human condition. "C'est la déficience ontologique qui est propre à la créature, tout au moins à la créature déchue."[1] It is a kind of inertia or negative activity which can be recognized but not eliminated.

This raises the question of the extent to which Marcel's position is a Christian one. In his discussion of the Christian conception of "radical insufficiency" in L'homme problématique, Marcel does not actually endorse the view that lack is necessary to man's condition as a sinner.[2] However, he is not always clear about the relationship between his philosophy and his religious beliefs. At times he considers them to be independent, and at other times, closely connected. Marcel maintains, for example, that proponents of a philosophy such as his need not necessarily be Christian, yet this philosophy is "magnetized" by Christian data.[3] And while the belief in creative fidelity does not depend on the adherence to a particular religious conception, Christian dogma confers on it a "transcendental justification" and infinitely heightens its "brightness."[4]

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[1] EA, p. 255.

[2] Gabriel Marcel, L'homme problématique (Paris: Aubier, 1955), pp. 103, 111. Cited hereafter as HP.

[3] RI, pp. 108-109.

[4] HV, p. 119.

Because Marcel's philosophy is a philosophy of "transcendence," there is an aspect which particularly lends itself to religious concerns. He is interested in the possibilities of experience, in stretching experience beyond its usual confines. Insofar as this is a central concern, he often works within a specifically Christian framework. He claims, in self-justification, that the more profoundly one penetrates into human nature, the more he places himself within the compass of the basic principles of Christianity.[1] But at the same time, Marcel is wary of being written off as a Christian philosopher. He insists that his philosophical position crystallized long before his conversion to Catholicism.[2] He comments, "Il est très possible que l'existence des données chrétiennes fondamentales soit requise en fait pour permettre à l'esprit de concevoir certaines des notions dont j'ai esquissé l'analyse: on ne peut sûrement pas dire que ces notions soient sous la dépendance de la révélation chrétienne, elles ne la supposent pas."[3]

Marcel's Christian affiliation is most evident in his discussion of specifically religious topics such as faith, immortality and the existence of God. In his analyses of the self, existence, truth and reflection, this affiliation is less apparent. The topic under consideration here, the ontological lack in the self, shows a tie to his religious beliefs, but is meant to extend beyond the Christian doctrine of the Fall. Therefore, while Marcel sometimes claims that this lack is necessary to man's

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[1] RI, p. 109.

[2] MO, p. 90.

[3] Ibid., p. 89.

condition, he is more interested in the nature of the lack and in ways in which it can be remedied.

This lack of being expresses itself both in depersonalization and egoism. Marcel frequently calls the depersonalized self the "on." The "on" lives in the world of the "purely natural," a world in which there are many problems but no mysteries. While giving the impression that he is acting, the depersonalized "on" is in fact submitting to or passively undergoing events. He reflects the ideas of others, living a life of irresponsibility, flight and evasion.[1] He makes no objection to the attempts of others to functionalize or classify him. He may even be unaware that these operations are taking place.

The level of the "on" is the level of the "il y a."[2] Only when the self is depersonalized can one say that there is (il y a) a self. The depersonalized self has no sense of being; the phrase "there is" indicates a degraded manifestation of existence.[3] For the "on," the ability to wonder atrophies. Marcel uses the examples of the artist who conceives of his work as a social function, and the mother who views maternity as onerous forced labor.[4] Contemporary society, in Marcel's opinion, is a central contributing factor in the depersonalization of the self. He develops this position in some detail in Les hommes contre l'humanité.[5]

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[1] RI, pp. 146-149; HV, p. 25.

[2] Marcel is stressing here an untranslatable difference between "il y a" and the verb "être." In both cases in English, forms of the verb "to be" are used.

[3] FR, p. 57.

[4] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[5] This is also the theme of a shorter work, La déclin de la sagesse (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1954). In this book Marcel presents three essays analyzing the dehumanizing effects of technological development on twentieth-century man.

The ontological lack is expressed in egoism as well as depersonalization. Marcel calls the egoistic self the "moi."[1] The "moi" is not equivalent to my body or to any one part of it because it is not a spatially bounded content. Instead, it is an emphasis or accent which I confer on my experience--a way in which I treat myself. It sets up a safeguard against attack or possible infringement by others. It can be understood as a global or unspecified feeling, a "center of magnetization."[2]

Characteristic of the "moi" is an attitude of self-centeredness. To describe it, Marcel uses the metaphors of enclosure and imprisonment. The "moi" is a prison of passions, material interests and prejudices. The egoist views all things from his own perspective, and walls the self in--enclosing and limiting it. As a result, the self is delivered over to the realm of the problematical.[3] Marcel does not make clear the exact status of the self which is imprisoned by the "moi." While different, it evidently coexists with the egoistic "moi." The implication is that it is the "essential" self, present in an unrecognized form.

The attitude of self-centeredness is accompanied by a hardening or "sclerosis." The experience of the "moi" is one of interior fixation or opacity.[4] This is not the necessary obscurity or "mystery" of the self; it is an obscurity that is self-imposed. Because the egoist thinks only

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[1]He defends this terminology with the argument that the word "ego" does not adequately indicate the reflexive aspect of the self which is present in egoism. The word "moi" allows for a distinction between the "me" and the "I" ("je").

[2]HV, pp. 16-19.

[3]HV, p. 27; MO, pp. 85-86.

[4]EA, pp. 106, 243; MO, p. 86.

of himself, he develops a "global blindness." He does not know his own needs or even what he is lacking. "L'égo-centrisme n'est ... possible que pour un être qui ne s'est pas effectivement rendu maître de son expérience, qui ne l'a pas véritablement assimilée."[1]

The blindness of the "moi" is also manifest in the fact that he identifies with a false image of himself. This can be a pose that he creates for others; but even more important, it is a pose that he puts on for himself. He is both the audience and the actor.[2] As a consequence of this false image he spends his life in self-ignorance. "C'est-à-dire qu'il évolue en marge du réel, comme un être en proie au somnambulisme."[3]

While unclear about what he is, at the same time, the egoist does not hesitate to affirm himself distinctly and aggressively. The "moi" is pointed out or "produced" in order to gain recognition. Seeing himself as a power with indisputable privileges, the egoist affirms his existence as he might affirm an attainment.[4]

Yet the egoist is not all self-confidence. Upon deeper probing the "moi" is found to be characterized by disquiet. Here Marcel is using "disquiet" in a pejorative sense, not in the positive sense of a healthy

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[1] FR, p. 11.

[2] HV, pp. 20-21. Marcel's position suggests a concept prevalent in recent psychological theory, even though he makes no mention of these counterparts to his view. Freud's "ego ideal," Jung's "persona," and Horney's "self image" all have something in common with what Marcel calls the "pose" of the egoist. See Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id" in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), Vol. XIX; C. G. Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961); and Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950).

[3] HV, p. 27.

[4] Ibid., pp. 23, 171.

state of questioning. It is a lack of assurance, expressed in the fear of missing something or in the obsessive feeling that time will run out.[1] One manifestation of disquiet is the experience of having or possession. The egoist becomes entangled in a dialectic of having. He is confronted with things external to himself and is obsessed with a need to internalize them, to make them one with himself. However, in his struggle to enslave them, he experiences anxiety. Because of the threat of the loss or destruction of these possessions, he strains to incorporate them completely. But he is thwarted, and finds that his possessions begin to control him, even to absorb him.[2]

> C'est avant tout l'expérience écartelante d'une contradiction entre le tout que j'aspire à posséder, à m'annexer, ou même, si absurde que ce soit, à monopoliser--et la conscience obscure de ce rien, de ce néant que je suis malgré tout; car, encore une fois, je ne peux rien affirmer de moi-même qui soit authentiquement moi-même; rien non plus qui soit permanent, rien qui soit à l'abri de la critique et de la durée.[3]

Marcel points out that one consequence of egoism is its effect on relations with others. In his preoccupation with himself the "moi" is unavailable--a screen between the egoist and others. The other becomes an annoying intrusion, a threat to the "interior perfection" of the "moi."[4] Nothing can enter the closed system of the egoist; he thoroughly alienates himself from others. At the same time, however, others take on considerable importance for him. While he cannot see clearly what the other person really is, the egoist becomes paralyzed by what he thinks the other is.

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[1] HP, p. 109.

[2] EA, pp. 235, 239-240.

[3] HV, p. 19.

[4] RI, pp. 132, 72; MO, p. 86.

In his self-consciousness he focuses on what he imagines that others think of him. Thus the "moi" is exceptionally vulnerable, "un enclos à vif."[1] He feels himself exposed to mortifying attacks, or else to the possibility of being ignored. He is a "here-now" who is constantly defending himself against others who threaten his rights.[2]

The egoist makes a claim on others in the form of a demand for confirmation, attention or praise. Paradoxically, it becomes the other person who can affirm the "moi," serving as a sounding board or amplificatory echo. But the demand is carefully qualified. The other must reflect an advantageous picture of the "moi," a picture which is then incorporated by the egoist. The resulting reflection is little more than a simulacrum, to which he refers his words and actions.[3]

Pursued therefore by the impossibility of reconciling his claims with the world, the egoist is perpetually dissatisfied. Unlike the depersonalized "on," the egoist has a strong conscious sense of lack. However, since he tends to translate this feeling into his enclosed system, the result is not significant change. Instead he tries harder than ever to obtain the impossible--to possess what cannot be possessed, and to claim from others what cannot be given.

It is evident from Marcel's discussions of depersonalization and egoism that he considers them destructive or damaging states. Yet he presents no argued defense of this position. While giving considerable space to his criticisms of objective conceptions of the self, he assumes

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[1] HV, p. 19.

[2] RM, p. 192.

[3] HV, pp. 19-21.

that his criticisms of depersonalization and egoism are obvious. In part he relies on his own conception of the self to fill in the missing arguments. This suggests by implication that Marcel thinks that if his conception is accepted, it necessarily follows that these states "impoverish" the self.

The criticisms which Marcel does offer are restatements of the assertion that depersonalization and egoism witness to a lack in the self. Functionalization "emaciates" the sense of being, entailing a degradation of creativity, the mutilation of human relations and the lack of positive values.[1] "La vie dans un monde axé sur l'idée de fonction est exposée au désespoir, elle débouche sur le désespoir, parce qu'en réalité ce monde est vide, parce qu'il sonne creux."[2]

But on what grounds does Marcel judge this "emaciation" of being? He suggests in one discussion of depersonalization that the basis for the protest is the existence of a "profound reality" which has been misunderstood.[3] But what is this reality? It appears that Marcel is assuming the existence of the "essential" self with its single manifestation. It is unclear, however, whether this self exists in conjunction with the ontological lack or whether it only exists after the lack is transcended.

The same difficulty appears in Marcel's few criticisms of egoism. He argues that egoism is harmful because it necessitates self-betrayal.[4]

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[1] FR, pp. 40-46.

[2] MO, p. 49.

[3] RM, p. 216.

[4] FR, p. 11. Marcel seems to contradict this position in Homo viator where he says that the "moi" cannot be judged. It has not "awakened" to reality and is therefore on "this side" of good and evil. HV, p. 27.

In concentrating all of his attention upon himself, the egoist blinds himself to what he "really" is. The "moi" lacks being; it is less than the self. The immobility and paralysis which result from egoism cannot be characteristic of the self at all.

Marcel's criticism of the ontological lack then rests exclusively on his conception of the "essential" self. He presupposes that the self is only when realized, and furthermore that it is better that the self be than not be. Consequently he judges the ontological lack negatively. If the state of lack is unacceptable, then it becomes necessary to determine how it can be transcended. The experience of transcendence is characterized by Marcel as one of self-realization, and it is this experience which provides the bridge between the ontological lack and the realized self.

# CHAPTER III

## SELF-REALIZATION

Because Marcel has divergent views of the nature of the self, he also maintains implicitly two views of the way in which the self is realized. Insofar as the self is only when in a state of full realization, there can be no means to its realization. The "essential" self cannot be made or created; it either is or it is not. If it is, there is no need to realize it; if it is not, there is no way of realizing it. For non-being cannot be changed into being. The only alternative to this position would be to say that the self is, but it is obscured. If this is the case, the self is fully realized but not recognized as such. The activity of recognition or discovery is a clearing away of false selves or of attitudes which conceal the self.

From the point of view of the "concrete" self, however, self-realization is an achievement or even a "conquest," but not a discovery. Marcel discusses a number of ways in which this conquest can be effected. He introduces and analyzes a group of attitudes and experiences which he considers fundamental to the change involved in self-realization. Creativity, hope, intersubjectivity and fidelity are but some among many in this group. Detailed "phenomenological analyses" of these experiences

make up a large part of Marcel's philosophical output.[1] Often in these analyses both of Marcel's views of the self are operating. Love and hope, for example, are presented both as ways of discovering the "essential" self and as ways of achieving or creating the "concrete" self.

Corresponding to the conflict in Marcel's two views of the self is a conflict in his analyses of the experiences just cited. When it is a question of the "essential" self, these experiences exist as actual states of the self. The "essential" self hopes, creates and is fully intersubjective. These experiences, like the self, are only when they are fully realized; and they are fully realized only when the self is.[2]

When Marcel assumes the "concrete" self, however, the various experiences he describes are both means of self-realization and characteristics of the realized self. This is possible because the "concrete"

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[1]Although Marcel often calls his method "phenomenological," there is no direct link between his work and that of Husserl. While referring to Husserl occasionally, Marcel finds Husserl's terminology awkward. (EA, p. 229.) Marcel labels his own analyses "phenomenological" mainly to emphasize their concreteness. "All I wish to do is to assert the rights of a phenomenology in the light of which the primacy of experience over what could be called pure thought must be rigorously preserved." (EB, p. 96.) He notes that he considers a phenomenological analysis to be the analysis of an "implicit content of thought," not a psychological analysis of states. (EA, p. 219.) Spiegelberg points out that Marcel is one of the first French philosophers to use phenomenology, in fact "one of its main inspirers," but that Marcel is not himself a phenomenologist. Spiegelberg contends that phenomenology is only one aspect of Marcel's thought, not a fundamental theme. Herbert Spiegelberg, The Phenomenological Movement: A Historical Introduction (2 vols; The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), I, pp. 424-425, 442.

[2]The implications of this aspect of Marcel's position and some of the difficulties it raises are discussed in detail in the third section of Chapter V, infra.

self has not one but many manifestations; and the same is the case with experiences such as hope and creativity. The growth of these experiences into their more valuable manifestations accompanies the growth of the self; and as they become transformed, they become the agents of change in the self. Insofar, therefore, as it is a matter of determining the causes of change, Marcel's discussion works from the "concrete" self.

This chapter will explore some of the means of self-realization as they are conceived by Marcel. However, the various experiences which go into the transformation of the self will not be discussed in their own right. The focus will be on the three central facets of change--facets which are common to all of the experiences analyzed by Marcel.

## A. The Stimulus of Change

If there is a transformation from a state of ontological lack to the realized self, something must initiate the change. The stimulus and path of change are far from random. Marcel proposes that this transformation starts with an experience of recognition. I become aware of an "exigency" within myself, felt initially as dissatisfaction. The exigency is an appeal from the "depths" of my being and an "urge" (élan) towards an affirmation of being.[1] Marcel does not designate the source of this appeal beyond saying that it comes from within, not from outside of the self.[2] He suggests indirectly that this exigency exists in everyone; it is an intrinsic human characteristic. Thus even the most depersonalized

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[1] FR, p. 39; MO, p. 56.

[2] RM, p. 52.

individual bears this exigency within him, although he ignores it. It is not, then, the fact of the exigency but the recognition of it which initiates change in the self.

The content of this appeal is a call to the individual to be. It is an "ontological" exigency, expressed in the phrase, "Il faut qu'il y ait--ou il faudrait qu'il y eût--de l'être."[1] Marcel takes particular pains to point out that the "il faut" cannot be translated in terms of need, desire or vague aspiration. It is a call to being which is at the same time an exigency of transcendence. To be, I must transcend the functionalized and egocentric state in which I am encased. The appeal is for liberation from what I am and have been; I am called to transcend the spontaneous course of my life.[2] Basically, it is the call from within myself to substitute new attitudes for the old. The new state is a purification of experience; it is experience "fully charged."[3]

This transcendence is an internal alteration, not an external one--"vertical," not "horizontal."[4] In horizontal "going-beyond" (dépassement) the principle of change lies outside the self, for example in the achievement of power or in the removal of external impediments. Vertical going-beyond concerns an interior change; the principle of change lies within the self. Marcel's example of a horizontal going-beyond is the decision of someone who marries for money. An illustration of vertical going-beyond is the renouncing of security and comfort in order to commit

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[1] MO, p. 51.

[2] HV, p. 171; EB, p. 94.

[3] RM, pp. 56-57; 64-65.

[4] Ibid., pp. 50-52.

oneself to a spiritual adventure. Vertical transcendence necessitates a basic change in attitude. It is such a change which is called for by the ontological exigency.

Because the ontological exigency is an exigency of transcendence, it is a stimulus of change only when there is a condition of ontological lack. It is accentuated in a situation in which there is imminent peril.[1] If this is the case, the ontological exigency is not experienced by all, as Marcel occasionally suggests, but only by those in a state of lack. For upon self-realization, the exigency is met and therefore no longer exists.[2] I do not experience the call to be once I am.

Not all those in a condition of ontological lack, however, recognize the exigency. What, then, causes the recognition? Why is the appeal heard at one time and not another? It cannot be solely a matter of grace, because for grace to be experienced, the recipient must be open and available, according to Marcel. These attitudes are not present in the egoist or the depersonalized "on."

It could be argued, in an attempt to clarify Marcel's position, that no egoist is completely impenetrable, and consequently he is at least able to recognize the ontological exigency. If, for example, it is assumed that the egoist is not completely closed to the influence of another, it may be that his encounter with another person can spur him to recognition of the exigency. Or the recognition may be the result of a strain put

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[1] EA, p. 55, note. In this passage Marcel uses the phrase "ontological need" (besoin). In the English edition of the Gifford Lectures, however, he rejects this terminology in favor of the phrase "ontological exigency." See Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being: Vol. II: Faith and Reality, trans. René Hague (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), p. 3.

[2] FR, pp. 46-47.

upon him by his external situation. If every individual has within him a basic push towards selfhood, the appeal would break through his functionalization under such circumstances and force recognition.[1] The acknowledgment of the ontological exigency, then, would depend both on the extent to which one is in a state of ontological lack and on his personal and external circumstances.

My recognition of the exigency at first takes the form of dissatisfaction. Initially a reaction against the world and others, this dissatisfaction eventually focuses on my own life and activities. I become aware of a gap between what I now am and what I can be; and I sense that by a movement of conversion, I can approach the latter state.[2] Marcel implies that the experiences of awareness and dissatisfaction are based on the fact that every person has a sense, obscure though it may be, of what he "really" is. Accompanying this sense is an urge to move beyond what he now is. These experiences eventually become transmuted into hope. "Mais ne serait-il pas possible que l'espérance fût un autre nom de l'exigence de transcendance ou qu'elle fût cette exigence même, pour autant

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[1]If this is a correct interpretation of Marcel's position, he is in close agreement with the positions of a number of American psychologists. Goldstein, Horney, Fromm and Maslow, while varying somewhat in terminology, all argue that self-realization just "happens" if the individual is allowed to grow at his own pace, without undue interference. While Marcel would not accept all aspects of these views, his concept of exigency is similar to Goldstein's "drive" towards self-actualization, Horney's "healthy strivings," Fromm's "tendency" to be productive, and Maslow's "growth motivation." Kurt Goldstein, The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology (New York: American Book Company, 1939), p. 204; Karen Horney, Neurosis and Human Growth, p. 37; Erich Fromm, Man For Himself: An Inquiry Into the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Rinehart and Company, Incorporated, 1947), p. 218; Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1962), Ch. III.

[2]RM, p. 152; MO, p. 63; FR, p. 33.

qu'elle est le ressort secret de l'homme itinérant?"[1] In whatever way the recognition of exigency expresses itself, Marcel makes it clear that I cannot will the response I make to it. It involves conditions over which I have no direct control.[2]

While Marcel often uses what appears to be objective psychological terminology to characterize the experiences which constitute the recognition of ontological exigency, he would argue that his position is not that of the descriptive psychologist. The difference can be partially indicated by Marcel's theory of participation. The recognition and the awareness which he describes are participatory. My sense of what I can be is a sense of what I "really" am; it is not a consciously formed ideal. To have this sense, I must participate in the self as a presence; the awareness which I have of this presence cannot be considered self-knowledge.

While Marcel provides no conclusive explanation of how one becomes aware of the ontological exigency, he is clear about the fact that such awareness is possible, and that it is a response to some "internal" phenomenon in the individual. Once ontological exigency is experienced, the ensuing dissatisfaction provides the stimulus for transformation of the self. This leads to the question of the nature of the transformation.

## B. The Character of Change

As a person becomes more fully realized, there is a corresponding shift in all aspects of his experience. While it is not clear as to whether Marcel considers this shift a cause or a consequence of the change in the

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[1] FR, p. 163.

[2] RM, pp. 52-53.

self, it always accompanies the change. Thus in the course of self-realization, my experiences of love and hope also deepen. I become more creative, more intersubjective, more available. Following a procedure parallel to his analyses of the self, Marcel begins all of his phenomenological analyses with descriptions of the negative expressions of the experiences in question. And, as is the case with the self, he views these expressions sometimes as pseudo-experiences posing as the real ones, and at other times as particular manifestations on one end of a scale of many manifestations.

Regardless of which point of view is operating, however, Marcel's judgment of the negative expressions of experiences such as hope, intersubjectivity, or creativity remains constant. They are unsatisfactory for reasons which by now are familiar. They evidence depersonalization and objectification of human relationships. Intersubjectivity, for example, in its negative manifestation, is an external and objective relation of juxtaposition of myself and another.[1] This only begins to change when I open myself up to the other and allow myself to be influenced. The other, who was a "that" now becomes a "thou" for me.[2]

The alteration in the experience of intersubjectivity is not an isolated change. It is accompanied by changes in all of the experiences which Marcel discusses. In fact these experiences turn out to be interdependent members of an extensive reticulum. Love becomes inseparable from

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[1] RM, p. 193.

[2] RI, pp. 50-53; FR, p. 155. Marcel's terminology here suggests the philosophy of Martin Buber. Not only on this point but also in the critique of objectification there is a similarity between the two philosophers. See Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (2d ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.) However, Marcel notes that he developed his own views of encounter and of the "thou" prior to his reading of Buber. (EB, p. 39.)

faith; availability is realized in hope.[1] Hope is essential to creativity; and freedom to intersubjectivity.[2] All the different aspects of the self are intimately connected. So while the experiences described retain their individuality, at their most complete, they interact with each other.

Whether Marcel refers to love or creativity, hope or fidelity, as change takes place, each experience shows an increasingly subtle balance of activity and receptivity. Because the concepts of activity and receptivity recur as frequently as they do in Marcel's analyses, they can be considered essential to his conception of the change in the self from lack to fulfillment.

As each experience is more fully realized, I become increasingly active. Yet this is not feverish or undirected activity. There are two facets to activity for Marcel. One is activity as action or performance; the other is activity as an attitude, on a par, for example, with optimism or friendliness. Of these two, the attitude is primary. The performance must be accompanied by the attitude to be called activity, while the opposite is not the case. The attitude can be present even when it is not expressed in a specific performance. Hope can include such an attitude, yet there need be no specific affirmation or instance of hoping. I need not always be <u>doing</u> to be active.

The attitude in question is present when I show interest in something, such as a goal.[3] It is a state of liveliness or alertness, in which my imaginative and creative faculties are focused. I am self-conscious, in

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[1]<u>FR</u>, p. 63; <u>RI</u>, p. 67.

[2]<u>HV</u>, p. 74; <u>EB</u>, p. 147.

[3]<u>RM</u>, p. 177.

a positive sense; ready to use all of my abilities. My condition is one of steady and willing preparedness. If this attitude is present, my whole life can take the form of an act. "On pourrait dire que plus une vie sera monnayée, c'est-à-dire distribuée en démarches discontinues, moins elle comportera d'actes, moins elle sera assimilable elle-même à un acte. Inversement, moins elle sera monnayée, plus elle sera, au sens profond du terme, consacrée, plus elle tendra à prendre tout entière la figure d'un acte unique."[1] If my life is an act, all of my energies are put to use; I am committed. Marcel speaks variously of commitment, engagement, consecration and affirmation--all experiences which entail the full use of my available resources. The engaged or committed person is an agent.

Marcel's discussion of the self as agent focuses in particular on the fact of personal responsibility. As an agent, the self claims and is liable for its action.[2] The action is always evaluated--judged as good or bad. The question arises here as to whether the agent can be instrumental in his own transformation. If, as Marcel claims, it is of the "essence" of the act to change,[3] can I change myself by action? Again, there is no

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[1] RI, p. 145. In his discussion of activity, Marcel offers a clear illustration of his "essential" assumptions, by pointing out that objectification of the act amounts to asserting the non-being of the act. "Il faudra donc reconnaître que penser l'acte, ce n'est pas, ce ne peut pas être l'objectiver, puisqu'en l'objectivant je tends à le traiter comme non-acte." RI, p. 144.

[2] RI, pp. 142-143. Marcel's position here can be compared to Macmurray's view of the self as agent. Macmurray too takes the self completely out of the epistemological setting and eliminates the self as subject. John Macmurray, The Self as Agent (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1957), Ch. IV. Both philosophers emphasize the intersubjective facets of the self. See also, John Macmurray, Persons in Relation (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1961), Ch. I.

[3] RI, p. 140.

clear-cut answer to this question. It can only be said that when change takes place, there is increased activity--either as attitude or performance. The relation between this activity and self-realization remains obscure.

One reason for this obscurity may be that in the shift towards the realized self, receptivity plays fully as important a role for Marcel as activity. Receptivity, like activity, can be an attitude. However, it is not a passive state preparatory to suffering or undergoing something; it is a "pre-affectation" or "pre-ordination." The receptive person orients himself towards another by developing a "qualified zone" in which he receives the other. This zone is the self of the "chez soi," identified by the quality of suggestibility or "impressionability."[1]

> Il apparaît immédiatement que l'être ainsi considéré ne constitue pas un tout autonome, et il n'est aucunement self-contained. Il est au contraire exposé à, il est ouvert à. ... On peut encore dire qu'il est perméable. ... Ce que nous visons n'est pas à proprement parler une porosité semblable à celle d'un vase par example. Mieux vaut penser à l'influençabilité. ... L'influençabilité est certainement liée dans tous les cas à un certain défaut de cohésion intérieure.[2]

The receptive person is capable of being influenced because he is open. He has no preconceived notion of what will influence him or how it will do so. He lets himself be borne along, much as an artist allows himself to respond to his environment. What influences him does not depend on him; he can only be waiting and receptive. Thus, according to Marcel, the most authentically receptive being is at the same time the most creative. Often Marcel speaks of this creative receptivity as "availability" (disponibilité).[3] It is a condition which allows for a full relationship with others and in addition for full self-understanding.

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[1] RI, pp. 120-122; Mystery of Being, I, p. 178.

[2] RM, p. 160.

[3] The French word "disponibilité" is difficult to translate. While most translators use "availability," Marcel prefers the phrase "spiritual readiness." (Personal communication from Marcel: November 25, 1963.)

Just as the active attitude can be expressed in action, the receptive attitude can be expressed in a specific response. Creation, for example, is a response to a call; faith to an invitation.[1] In the light of the association of receptivity with response, receptivity comes to have aspects in common with activity. In fact, it is insofar as they are related or combined that they play a part in self-transformation. Marcel frequently speaks of "réceptivité active."[2] In a discussion of time, he notes, "Le sujet n'est pas pure réceptivité. ... Le sujet est engagé en tant qu'agent (et il n'est réceptivité qu'à condition d'être du même coup agent) dans le contenu qu'il était censé déchiffrer purement et simplement."[3]

As the self is realized, the two attitudes become balanced. Sometimes Marcel suggests that the relationship of activity and receptivity is one of exchange; but more frequently he speaks of their identification, fusion or union.[4] They are two aspects of one and the same experience. Again, Marcel's example is that of the artist. "Il n'y a sûrement pas de création hors d'un certain mystère qui enveloppe le créateur et sourd à travers lui; en sorte que ce que nous appelons création est au fond une médiation au sein de laquelle, comme l'ont vu les romantiques, passivité et activité s'unissent et se fondent."[5]

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[1] EB, p. 126; EA, p. 310.

[2] PM, p. 150; FR, p. 140; EB, p. 126.

[3] EA, p. 18. In this quotation, "sujet" seems to refer to the self, not to the epistemological subject.

[4] MO, p. 81; RI, pp. 124, 157.

[5] RI, p. 157. Here Marcel uses "passivité" to mean "réceptivité." Elsewhere, however, he rejects the use of "passivité" stating that it cannot be confused with active or creative receptivity. EB, p. 126.

With this illustration Marcel suggests rather than develops his position. While aesthetic experiences of many kinds repeatedly engage his interest, he makes no attempt to work out the implications or ramifications of the suggestions he makes. The experience of the artist seems to illustrate the balance of activity and receptivity for Marcel because this experience offers identifiable manifestations of activity and receptivity. The indication that the artist is receptive lies in the fact that he must have a content with which he can work. The fact that such content is available to him suggests a well-developed capacity on his part to be "influenced." That the artist is active is indicated by the art object itself. This object is the product which, while not necessarily a result of activity, still serves as a probable manifestation of such activity.

A balance of activity and receptivity similar to that illustrated in the artist occurs, therefore, when self-realization takes place. There is an increased unity and consistency of attitude. I no longer find myself sometimes extremely receptive and at other times extremely active. Instead, my experience evidences a harmony of both attitudes.

The question remains, however, of how change in the self is implemented. Even if the recognition of ontological exigency is accepted as the stimulus of change, it does not explain the direction and persistency of change. And active receptivity appears to be characteristic, but not a cause of change. What keeps the movement towards self-realization steady? What if any is the role of the person who is undergoing the change? Does he influence it in any way? Insofar as there is an answer to these questions, it can be found in Marcel's discussion of freedom and the will.

## C. The Implementation of Change

Both freedom and the will play a role in self-realization, but not as they are understood in the traditional philosophical sense. Marcel undertakes a critique of the accepted views of freedom in order to clear a way for his own conception. He works primarily with a view which he attributes to the Stoics; and he argues that according to this conception, freedom is an essential attribute of human nature. It is manifested in a willed choice between alternative actions. Or more strongly put, it is the exercising of a quantitative force to effect action which is in opposition to desire. This exercising of will follows a prior calculation of possibilities--a determination of what is or is not in the agent's power.

Marcel's criticism of this conception occupies by far the greater share of his discussion of freedom. He focuses first on the notion that freedom is an attribute. According to this view, I am free by definition, for freedom is an essential predicate of man. While presenting no detailed criticism of this position, Marcel insists that this is not what he means by freedom. I am not "born free" nor can I make the statement, "I am free;" for freedom cannot be something one states. It is not a given faculty.[1]

Marcel goes on to attack the idea that freedom is manifested in action that is planned, willed and executed. He rejects both a "weak" and a "strong" interpretation of this theory. The weak interpretation is that freedom is a selection of one of two alternatives.[2] The strong interpretation is that freedom is the activity of conscious and autonomous willing

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[1] EB, p. 146; FR, pp. 114-115; RI, p. 78.

[2] FR, p. 116.

in opposition to desire.[1]

According to the weak interpretation an act is free simply because it is a choice. Both of two alternatives are equally possible. According to Marcel there are a number of reasons why this is not true freedom. First it materializes freedom. "On est toujours enclin à se représenter la volonté libre comme venant se placer à la façon d'un poids supplémentaire dans un des plateaux d'une balance qui, sans cette intervention décisive risquerait d'osciller indéfiniment."[2] Marcel's criticism of this position is implicit in his condemnation of objectification. An objective conception of freedom has all the faults of an objective conception of the self. Because free will is not a measurable object, materialistic representations either refer to something which is not freedom or to an inferior form of freedom.

Marcel's second objection to the weak interpretation of freedom is that it puts freedom on the same level as determinism. If freedom is merely a choice between alternatives, it is but one factor in the determination of an event.[3] Thus reduced, the free act becomes the insignificant act, an act that can be performed by anyone.[4] For Marcel, the weakness of this position is self-evident. Freedom is only present when the alternatives are meaningful. By implication, freedom is a value; and

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[1]Ibid., p. 111. The distinction between a "weak" and a "strong" interpretation of freedom is my own, not Marcel's. It is introduced to facilitate the exposition.

[2]FR, p. 117.

[3]Ibid., pp. 114-115. Marcel's criticisms suggest Bergson's analysis of freedom. "The determinist . . . is thus led to a mechanical conception of the self. He will show us this self hesitating between two contrary feelings, passing from one to the other and finally deciding in favour of one of them. The self and the feelings which stir it are thus treated as well defined objects, which remain identical during the whole of the process." Time and Free Will, pp. 170-171.

[4]FR, pp. 117-118.

this objection is less an argued criticism than a veiled statement of Marcel's own conception of freedom.

Marcel's criticism of the weak interpretation of freedom, then, is a modification of his broader criticism of objectification. If freedom is seen as a mode of causality, it cannot withstand the attack of determinists; and it becomes little more than determinism unrecognized. Determinism is an objective conception, bearing all the inadequacies of any objectification.

Of more concern to Marcel, however, is the strong interpretation of freedom. According to this conception, as he interprets it, a free act is preceded by a preliminary estimation of what is in one's power. To act freely, I must have knowledge. This knowledge is based on the memory of what I have been able to do previously and on my awareness of what is currently in my power.[1] If, for example, I am prevented from visiting a sick friend by inalterable external circumstances, I cannot say that my decision not to visit him indicates my freedom.

Following the appraisal of what can or cannot be done, the free person calculates the advantages of different courses of action. I put my desires and preferences on one side of a scale, the obstacles on the other side, and weigh them against each other. After conscious deliberation, I propose a coherent goal for myself.[2] My freedom resides in the fact that my action is completely under my control. What I finally decide to do is dependent upon my deliberation alone.

Marcel criticizes this conception for its misrepresentation of

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[1] HV, p. 64.

[2] JM, p. 216; RI, p. 73; FR, p. 118.

experience. He uses the now familiar argument that there are elements of objectification in this view. However, he directs a more basic criticism against the assumption that experience can be calculated and controlled. How, Marcel asks, can I know completely what I am or what I shall be? I cannot fully determine what is in my power; often I only recognize a posteriori that an act has been free.[1] If I decide to visit my sick friend, there is no way of knowing how I shall feel or act during the visit. My attitude may change significantly upon the actual encounter, and the whole previous calculus can be upset. To say that a simple decree of the will determines consequent actions is to vastly oversimplify experience. In many situations as well, a calculation of possibilities cannot be made. Marcel is not maintaining here that deliberation about possibilities is irrelevant to action. Rather, it is not what makes the action free.

Not only is the assumption about the character of experience faulty, but also the accompanying view of the nature of the will. The strong interpretation of freedom converts will into a force, with degrees or gradations. In my decision to visit my friend, I supposedly call upon a quantitative power that I have stored within me, and I experience an interior tension or contraction.[2] Marcel objects primarily to the quantitative emphasis. To see freedom as the exercising of a determinate quantity of force is to assimilate it to an instrument, like a lever, which supplies

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[1] FR, p. 118.

[2] JM, pp. 183, 216. It could be maintained that Marcel's presentation of the conception of freedom in question is inadequate. The notion of will which he attacks, for example, is given an excessively materialistic interpretation. However, as is often the case in Marcel's analyses, he is less interested in developing a detailed criticism of an established position than in providing an entry for his own conception.

a specific result.[1] "Ce qui a tout faussé ici, comme d'ailleurs dans les parties les plus hautes de l'éthique, c'est une certaine représentation stoicienne de la volonté conçue comme un raidissement alors qu'elle est au contraire détente et création."[2]

Marcel questions two other aspects of the strong interpretation of freedom--the emphasis on action and the assumption of autonomy. It is implied that I am free only when I am doing something, when my will is operating as an active force. But this need not be the case. I can experience profound freedom when I am in a state of captivity.[3] Here as with "active receptivity," freedom is closer to an attitude than to a performance.

The assumption of autonomy is implicit in the strong interpretation of freedom. The emphasis on the conscious control and administration of actions suggests that when I am free, I act in isolation.[4] The difficulty with this part of the conception is that it reduces freedom to a possession.[5] It circumscribes personal activity in space and time. The assumption of autonomy is, in fact, at odds with Marcel's entire conception of the self.

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[1] Ibid., p. 183, note.

[2] MO, p. 75.

[3] FR, p. 111.

[4] Marcel is coining a meaning for "autonomy" in this discussion. His conception has no relation to the Kantian theory of autonomy. Nor is he referring to the more ordinary meaning of independence or self-sufficiency. Instead, he uses the word to indicate a denial of intersubjectivity or a refusal to be available.

[5] EA, pp. 252-253.

His criticism, however, takes the form of a disguised statement of his view that freedom is a value. Freedom, he claims, can only be present when I enter integrally into activities, and the more this happens, the less autonomous I am.[1]

Marcel's final criticism of this conception focuses on the claim that freedom is the operation of the will in opposition to desire. This position leads to unacceptable ethical consequences. If I am free only when I oppose my desires, I obviously am not free when I yield to them. Do I not, then, forfeit responsibility for a great many of my actions? If I claim that a power independent of my will is exercising over me a tyranny which is too strong to resist, I detach my desires from myself and transfer the responsibility for my actions to some external force. This has two unfortunate results. First, I allow my desires to reduce me to slavery; and secondly, I make it impossible to exact anything from others. For if I am not responsible when my desires take possession of me, how can I impute responsibility to others under similar circumstances?[2]

In the course of his criticisms of the weak and strong interpretations of freedom, Marcel suggests his own position. Freedom cannot be objectified or instrumentalized. It is not always present. Instead, it is a value, which can only become operative under certain circumstances. I must make myself free; I must win my freedom. Freedom is a conquest--one which is precarious and often threatened.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 253.

[2]FR, pp. 112-114.

[3]EB, pp. 87-88; 146.

For freedom to be won, it is necessary to resist the world of functionalization and dehumanization. The affirmation which is essential to the free act is one which sculpts the person; it contributes to the creation of the self by the self.[1] Marcel proposes that to say that I am free is to say that I am my "real" self. On the occasions in which I am not this self, when I act automatically or as an egoist, I am no longer free.[2]

As Marcel presents it, freedom is not choice. Choice is a selection of one alternative and an elimination of another. Freedom, on the other hand, is not selection but affirmation; it is not elimination but resistance or refusal. The difference between selection and affirmation could lie in the fact that affirmation is creative or revelatory. When I select, I have no influence upon the character of the object selected. When I affirm, however, that which I affirm is different because I affirm it.

The affirmation of the self which is made by the free man seems to be related to what has been described previously as participation in the self. While Marcel does not enlarge on this possibility, the concept of affirmation could be used to distinguish participation in the self from the affective and mnemonic modes of participation. In participating in the self I affirm the self, altering the latter as the affirmation takes place. If the "essential" self is assumed, this alteration takes the form of an uncovering or liberation of the self. If the "concrete"

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[1] FR, p. 118.

[2] Ibid., p. 115. Again this suggests Bergson who says, "It is the whole soul, in fact, which gives rise to the free decision: and the act will be so much the freer the more the dynamic series with which it is connected tends to be the fundamental self." Time and Free Will, p. 167.

self is assumed, the alteration is one in which the self is newly created.[1]

Freedom, however, is not only affirmation. It can also take the form of refusal. Unlike the elimination which occurs when a choice is made, refusal is an active resistance to the forces of functionalization and dehumanization. The refusal, if directed against these forces, serves to strengthen the affirmation of the self. However, Marcel introduces a complicating factor by pointing out that I can also refuse to be free. I can be confronted with the possibility of being free and not actualize it. Marcel maintains that this fact makes freedom a mystery; because even in refusing, I am exercising my freedom. Freedom intervenes in the very act that denies it. Like the self, it is a problem which encroaches on its own data. It is of the essence of freedom to be able to exercise itself in betraying itself.[2] In addition, I can refuse to actualize any value. I can refuse the mediation of others; I can refuse grace. I can refuse to recognize or respond to another. The extreme form of refusal is suicide, and this too is a free act.[3]

This part of Marcel's conception of freedom, however, raises some difficulties. If it is present in the refusal to be free, freedom must be something other than a value. For it operates even when the value is rejected. By allowing that refusal is also freedom, Marcel implies that freedom is not necessarily made or won. I am free whether I make an affirmation or not.[4] Insofar as freedom is affirmation, it appears as a

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[1]For a development of this distinction, see Chapter IV, A, infra.

[2]HP, p. 45; EA, p. 138.

[3]EB, p. 145.

[4]This is also consonant with Marcel's view that there is freedom whenever responsibility is attributed to action. (FR, p. 114.) If it is granted that we are responsible for our trivial as well as significant actions, freedom becomes less a value than a descriptive attribute of self-conscious behavior.

particular value; but insofar as it is refusal, it goes beyond this value to become characteristic of a wider range of experience.

Ambiguities in Marcel's conception of freedom make it difficult to consider freedom instrumental to self-realization. If affirmation can take place only when other values have been realized, a prerequisite of freedom is an advanced state of self-realization. Freedom as affirmation seems to presuppose fulfillment as one of its conditions. Freedom, then, is not essentially different from the experiences of hope, love or fidelity. It accompanies self-realization and becomes more complete in the process, but it is not itself directly a means to that realization.

Unlike freedom as affirmation, freedom as refusal does not presuppose the realized self in order to exist; but it cannot be instrumental in change. For refusal is a negation of being; it operates in opposition to self-realization. What remains, then, is the conclusion that it is not because I am free that I become fulfilled. My freedom--in only one of its aspects--develops alongside of this fulfillment.

But if the realized self is not the result of a free act, and if it is not the result of creative receptivity, how is it achieved? Is there no way in which I can implement my own development? Marcel proposes on occasion that fulfillment depends on the experience of grace; and that without grace, freedom is reduced to a caricature. Grace, a gift which can be neither demanded nor summoned, is an assistance which allows me to transcend the constraints of my existence.[1] However, the concept of grace

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[1] HP, p. 71; HV, pp. 212, 242. It is on this point that Marcel strongly objects to Sartre's conception of freedom. In an essay on Sartre, Marcel points out that Sartre's exclusion of the concepts of grace and receptivity, and his emphasis on negation make his view unacceptable. Gabriel Marcel, "L'existence et la liberté humaine chez Jean-Paul Sartre," dans Les grands appels de l'homme contemporain (Paris: Editions du temps présent, 1947), passim.

does not escape the circularity which is present in the concepts of freedom and active receptivity.[1]

Marcel's discussion of self-realization, then, presents a number of difficulties. The process begins with an exigency and results in fulfillment, but the change itself lacks determining factors. It seems, indeed, to determine itself. But this too is questionable since in the course of change the shift away from ontological lack takes a precise course. If it is self-determined, or if no exterior factors influence the change, the self would either remain in a state of ontological lack or follow a fluctuating undirected course. But neither of these situations occurs. The transformation involves a radical shift in the mode of experience and a development in a definite direction. Some of the problems with Marcel's view of the means of self-realization can be traced to the "essential"-"concrete" conflict already noted. However, further discussion of this will be delayed until after a presentation of the third aspect of Marcel's conception--the realized self.

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[1]For a development of this topic, see Chapter V, C., infra.

# CHAPTER IV

## THE REALIZED SELF

Marcel's conception of the self focuses throughout on the importance of transformation and transcendence. The shift in experience away from the ontological lack is necessary for the self to be. The prominence of this theme in his philosophy gives rise to the question of the nature of the realized self. In this area of his thought, Marcel is far from explicit. While ontological lack lends itself readily to his analyses, the realized self is more elusive. The conception of ontological sufficiency which is called for is notably absent. It is, in fact, at this juncture in Marcel's thought that the conflicts already pointed out form a barrier to a conclusive analysis of the self. The realized or sufficient self is a necessary outcome of the discussion, yet Marcel does not accept the concept of sufficiency.

This chapter will deal with two problems about the status of the realized self. The first is that of whether the realized self is a discovery or an achievement. The second is that of the conflict between realization and disquiet in Marcel's thought, and of the threat of this conflict to the very notion of a realized self. Marcel does not discuss these problems directly, but they emerge as basic to his total conception of the self. The analysis in this chapter remains expository rather than critical, but it is meant to serve as a foundation for a subsequent

criticism of Marcel's position.

The first problem is concerned with whether the realized self exists prior to explicit actualization or whether it fully exists only when actualized. If the first of the alternatives is the case, the realized self always exists but is concealed; and it must be discovered or liberated. This position would locate Marcel's thought within the Idealist tradition, linking him to both Platonic and Hegelian thought. If, on the other hand, the realized self does not exist prior to its manifestation, it is not a discovery but an achievement--something created. The first part of this chapter will point out this dual direction in Marcel's thought and also will show how Marcel attempts to resolve the seeming conflict between the two positions.

The second problem is concerned with whether the realized self is in fact possible. Because Marcel claims that disquiet and a sense of longing are necessary aspects of homo viator, he challenges the very concept of a realized self. If disquiet is necessary, and if it is defined in terms of lack, then lack is present in every self; and sufficiency or full realization are not possible. Here again, Marcel tries to resolve the conflict; although for the most part this conflict and the possible solutions do not surface in his analysis. The second part of the chapter is an attempt to make this conflict explicit and to show some of its implications for Marcel's conception of the self.

## A. Discovery or Achievement?

To be a discovery, the self must be present prior to realization, in states in which an ontological lack is still experienced. Marcel suggests that this is the case, in his analysis of ontological lack. When this lack exists, the egocentric "moi" forms a prison or shell. The individual is alienated, or "off-center."[1] The imprisonment metaphor suggests that something is imprisoned; and for there to be alienation, one must be alienated from something. The center is, according to Marcel, the individual's being; or, by implication, his realized self. This being exists either in fact as something imprisoned; or potentially, perhaps as an ideal. It is present but ignored, and ontological lack is a species of blindness.

In the transcendence of ontological lack, a similar situation prevails. The experience of transcendence presupposes the operation of the realized self. Hope, for example, is a means to self-realization, but relies on the realized self for its own realization. For there to be hope, the subject cannot be the "moi" of ontological lack--for this would transform hope into desire.[2] Contemplative self-encounter is also necessary for transformation of the self to take place. Yet for contemplation to occur the contemplator must be assured of his grasp of reality; he must probe beneath the "surface" of the real.[3] The reality which must be

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[1] RM, p. 152; PI, p. 122.

[2] EB, p. 142.

[3] RM, p. 139.

grasped in contemplation and the fuller being that is necessary for hope both appear to be the individual's own reality--his self in its fullest manifestation. Here, the realized self seems to be present before its explicit occurrence.

The circularity of this position can be overcome if the earlier expression of the realized self is different in kind from its expression when concretely embodied. In this case the realized self is both a prerequisite and a goal of change, taking respectively a different form. If Marcel views the earlier status of the realized self as that of a potentiality or an ideal, an individual draws on his sense of his full being when he hopes or when he contemplates. Yet this does not allow for the concepts of imprisonment and self-alienation. Here the being or self that is implicitly present is more than an ideal or potentiality. It is the actual self which has been obscured by egoism and depersonalization. Under these circumstances self-realization can only be a recuperative enterprise. It is a matter of freeing the "real" self--not of realizing an ideal or of building a new self.

The question of the status of the realized self is further complicated by the fact that Marcel sometimes argues that it is to be achieved, not discovered or liberated. For example, he claims that in personal development one accomplishes or creates his being.[1] While it might be argued that discovery can be creative, Marcel uses the concept of creation to signify innovation. There is more at stake than a recuperative enterprise, for creation is transformatory. As a result of a

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[1] RI, p. 76; FR, p. 46.

variety of creative experiences, there is an unexpected "promotion and transfiguration" of the self.[1] The complete self which is the result of creation is different from what went before.

Three questions emerge from the discussion thus far. First, is the realized self always present in some form in the individual? Secondly, if it is present, in what form is it present? Finally, how does its presence allow for the fact that the realized self is the novel result of creative activity? One attempt on Marcel's part to deal with these difficulties can be found in his discussion of re-collection.[2] In his analysis of re-collection he tries to maintain the two views--that the realized self has a prior existence and that it is something different from anything that has gone before. The first position is suggested by the inclusion in the concept of re-collection of an element of return; while the second is embodied in the discussion of re-collection as a creative act. Because Marcel's discussion of re-collection offers a particularly clear illustration of both views, it will be examined in detail.

In discussing re-collection, Marcel uses a number of related concepts. He speaks variously of introversion, encounter (rencontre), recognition (reconnaissance) and recovery (ressaisissement). For the most

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[1] HV, p. 86.

[2] "Re-collection" is a translation of the French word "recueillement." I prefer this translation to Fraser's "ingatheredness" and Spiegelberg's "recovery" because neither of these two translations allows for the double sense of meditation and return. However, Marcel is not referring to an act of remembering nor to the specifically religious discipline. Instead, as is shown below, he has in mind a type of contemplative self-awareness. In a letter of November 25, 1963, Marcel characterizes "recueillement" as "une sorte de rassemblement de soi-même, une façon de se dégager de la dispersion pure qui caractérise la vie simplement vécue."

part these words appear to refer to the same activity--a turning inward of one's attention upon the self. Re-collection is, however, a combination of two activities--turning inward and contemplation. The turning inward is a re-directing of my external awareness or consciousness towards my self and away from the world.[1] However, it is not introspection, for introspection carries a suggestion of an objective spectator. The reality which I encounter in re-collection--the self--is not external. It enters directly into the activity of re-collecting. While being a spectator allows for distance from the object, re-collection does not.

At the same time, this turning inward is contemplative. It is an act in which I impose silence on myself. The world of language becomes a factor which inhibits the concentration of thought. As language drops away, the resultant silence is positive--the re-establishing of a plenitude.[2] By implication, re-collection is a highly disciplined activity. Like the other "means" of self-realization, it can only operate after the self has transcended, to some extent, the state of ontological lack.

There are two phases to re-collection, a retreat and a return. The retreat includes first a "distancing" from the present self and then a judgment of that self. In the distancing I withdraw or retire from my life. Yet this disengagement is not the abstracting of a pure subject of knowledge. It is a "humble retreat" in which I abandon my ordinary unreflective self-occupation in order to come to more full awareness of my

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[1] RM, pp. 142, 146.

[2] RM, p. 144; EA, p. 164; EB, p. 86. On this subject, see also Max Picard, The World of Silence, trans. Stanley Godman (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), pp. 8-35. In a number of places Marcel acknowledges an indebtedness to Picard. See RM, p. 158 and HP, p. 52.

present self.[1] Marcel stresses that this is not an objectification of the self. Yet it is not clear as to how objectification can be avoided. Perhaps "distancing," while a spatial metaphor, is meant by Marcel to convey a change of perspective or attitude, rather than an actual separation.

Following "distancing," there is judgment. I take up a position opposite my life in order to appraise and condemn it. What I condemn is my present self, the self of distractions, emotion and appetite. It is this self that estranges me from my "real" self.[2] The judgment then is passed in the name of this "real" self. "Je puis apprécier ma vie telle qu'elle est, au nom de la vie que je porte en moi, la vie que j'aspire à vivre, la vie que je devrais vivre pour être pleinement moi-même."[3] But if the judgment is grounded in the knowledge of a self that I aspire to be, what is the source of this aspiration? If it is an ideal, what insures that it embodies the realized self?

The answers to these questions can be found in part in Marcel's discussion of the second stage of re-collection--the return. That there is a return is evidenced by the terminology which he uses. The common prefix re in the verbs "recueillir," "rencontrer," "rentrer" and "reconnaître" carries the sense of going back. Re-collection is a recovery, a re-immersion, a re-establishing of contact.[4] "C'est essentiellement l'acte par lequel je me ressaisis comme unité: le mot même l'indique, mais ce ressaisissement, cette reprise affecte l'aspect d'une détente,

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[1] MO, pp. 62-64, 76.

[2] RM, pp. 145, 152; MO, p. 63; EB, p. 88.

[3] RM, p. 152.

[4] EB, pp. 86, 88.

d'un abandon."[1] If there is a return, however, there must be a return to something; and Marcel's reflexive use of the verbs cited above suggests that this is the self. The person who re-collects comes back, and grasps or re-seizes the self. He joins this self as a unified whole; he re-establishes contact with his "ontological base."[2]

It must be, then, a premonition of this ontological base that provides the standards for the judgment which is made prior to the return. The goal of the return, the self, already exists in some form. I have an obscure sense of what the self is, in spite of the fact that the latter is hidden. The self to which I return in re-collection is not the self that was given before; it is not the self that withdrew to make a judgment.

However, Marcel is now faced with two problems. What is the relation between the earlier self and the self to which I return? And what is the precise status of the latter? His answer to the first question is developed in terms of an analogy between musical and personal creation. In re-collection there is the same interior change that occurs in the development of a musical theme. The composer starts with an initial theme and returns to that same theme. However, between the first and final statements, the theme becomes transformed by a series of modifications. Thus, although the same notes are present in the final statement of the theme, it is experienced differently. "Charged" with the intervening development, it bears the weight of all the transformation it has undergone.[3]

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[1] MO, p. 63.

[2] Ibid., p. 76.

[3] RM, p. 147.

The self to which I return in re-collection is both the same as and different from my "initial" self. It is the same in that there is the continuity of personal identity, and it is different because a process of transformation or creation has intervened. In the development of the musical theme, however, the "return" refers to the fact of the identical form of the themes. The same notes are played in both the initial and final statements. But in this respect, the analogy obscures rather than clarifies Marcel's discussion of re-collection. For the "return" in re-collection has a more inclusive meaning. It is not a return to the same self, to the same "notes," but to the realized self. And this realized self existed prior to the development or transformation.

Marcel's argument at this point calls for a distinction between the initial and the final self. How can they be both the same and different? And, in fact, are there not three selves--the self that judges, the present self that is judged and the realized self to which one finally returns? Marcel deals with this question in his discussion of truth, but his main argument can be transposed to the discussion of re-collection.

Marcel introduces the analysis of truth by observing that one and the same person can confer on a fact its power to be true and yet, at the same time, resist that truth. I confer the power of truth because, separate from me as an experiencing being, the fact has no truth value. But I also can shut myself off from the very value I have thus given to the fact. Already there seem to be two selves operating. And there is even a third self--the self that finally recognizes the truth and experiences a sense of relief. Marcel's example is that of parents who refuse to recognize that their child is abnormal. They confer the "light" of truth on this fact; they then resist it; but finally they open themselves

to it and indeed welcome it. But how can the self that welcomes the truth be the same self that struggled to resist the truth?[1]

Marcel answers this question by claiming that these are not separate selves. Any such dissociation would be artificial. One can only divide up objects, things of which elements can be designated. There are no elements in the self; it cannot be grouped into terms. There are not, then, two or three selves, but only differences in the one self. The "selves" described above are different existential modalities or "tones" of existence. They are not distinct kinds of being which can be predicated of the same substance. So to speak of an exchange or debate within the same personality is not to double the self.[2]

If this is the case, the different "selves" in re-collection turn out to be modalities, not separate phenomena. The "I" that judges, the "me" that is judged, and the final realized self to which I return are all one and the same self. Their difference lies in the fact that there has been a change or growth. But if change or creative growth determines the difference, how is it possible to return to a realized self? Marcel leaves the discussion of re-collection with no clear solution to this problem. He seems to be saying that realization entails both innovation and return. The realized self is already present in both the self that judges and in the self that is judged. Yet something is added to it when it is encountered in re-collection. It becomes more than it is.

If the realized self is always present even though not manifest,

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[1]RM, pp. 76-81.

[2]Ibid., pp. 76, 88, 145-147.

this would provide one explanation of the experiences of ontological exigency and aspiration. The person in a state of ontological lack aspires or forms ideals because his being is latent within him. The exigency is an obscure appeal from this self--an appeal which can easily be denied by the egoist or the depersonalized "on." If, however, the "return" aspect of re-collection and of self-realization is stressed, the creative dimension of the process becomes subordinate. The role of creative activity becomes largely one of clearing away obstructions. It is less a matter of innovation than one of successful recovery.

## B. Realization or Disquiet?

A second submerged conflict appears in Marcel's views about whether the state of realization is achievable. One direction of his thought leads to the conclusion that the realized self is both possible and a state to be sought. Another direction, however, suggests that complete realization violates the very nature of man. Man is forever a voyager, always on the way. In particular, Marcel's notion of what a philosopher should be conveys the sense that the journey is more significant than the journey's end. Again, as with the notions of discovery and achievement, there is an attempt on Marcel's part to combine these seemingly incompatible views.

First there is the theme that the realized self is a valuable and attainable goal. The fact that Marcel often refers to plenitude and the "real" self suggests that he considers the state a possible one. He speaks, for example, of the expression of the self's being and of the

realized self as the self that fully is.[1] Once realized, one is "capable of communing with himself and so of renewing contact with an invisible and limitless reality."[2] On some occasions Marcel characterizes the realized self as the "person," as set over against the depersonalized "on." The person is the responsible and integrated individual, a perfect master of himself. He can confront a given situation directly and engage himself effectively.[3] When the self is realized, experiences such as hope, inter-subjectivity, and faith are fully present.

Marcel's discussion of non-contingency further supports the view that realization is possible. One result of positive change in the self is that it is transformed into a non-contingent reality. There is a feeling of significance or meaning to one's life. As unification takes place, the person returns to himself and experiences exceptional clarity. This is also a result of the orientation which occurs in re-collection. In getting his bearings, the person discerns what is uniquely important and valuable to himself.[4] He has a sense of belonging to himself; he has a point of view. Just as any meaningful encounter with another person cannot be seen as pure accident, neither can the meaningful encounter with the self be so understood. At this point, when the self is fully realized, one's life is no longer felt as some chance improvisation without direction.[5]

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[1] EB, p. 88; FR, pp. 43, 46.

[2] EB, p. 94.

[3] EB, p. 162; HV, p. 25.

[4] RM, pp. 150, 153, 157-158.

[5] Ibid., pp. 153, 189-190.

Yet Marcel introduces another theme which appears to run directly counter to this position. This is his argument for the necessity of disquiet or nostalgia. This theme appears primarily in his discussion of depth or the profound. The sense of the profound is a dimension or quality of experience, not a place or a starting-point. Marcel characterizes it as the dimension of essence, not existence. It carries one beyond existence insofar as existence is one's present life. It cannot be invoked without stamping the existent with a certain unreality.[1]

Marcel uses the notion of essence primarily to convey a sense of both nearness and distance. At the heart of depth, the near and the distant identify. The element of nearness is found in the clarity of the experience. It is not a strictly spatial or temporal dimension but is instead the felt "interior" of a certain domain. Marcel speaks of it as the sense of a "tout près," or an "absolute here."[2] More important, however, is the element of distance. The essential or the profound involves an element of "something more," something that cannot be directly grasped.[3] It is this distance which leads to an experience of dissatisfaction or disquiet. The disquiet in question is not a sense of the unusual or paradoxical, nor is it mere curiosity. Furthermore, it cannot be interpreted temporally as the future--as something which is to be realized at a later date.[4]

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[1] RM, pp. 207-210; PI, p. 34.

[2] RM, p. 208; PI, pp. 30, 32, 35.

[3] RM, p. 234.

[4] RM, pp. 205, 209; PI, p. 21.

Marcel introduces a number of metaphors in an attempt to convey his meaning. Disquiet is experienced in the same way that a secret is; it is like the feeling of a promise still unrealized, like the childhood phantasy of mysterious and inaccessible places. Or again, the sense of disquiet is similar to the experience of a channel opening out to the sea, but an opening out which is still only expected. Most important of all, it resembles the nostalgia of an exile, yearning for a home.[1]

All of the metaphors used show a similar content. They include a present state, a distant state and an intense desire to bridge the gap between the former and the latter. The secret is not yet told, the promise not realized, the mysterious place inaccessible. Yet the telling and the realization are anticipated. There is a presentiment of what they will be and this anticipation is accompanied by longing. In terms of the experience of the self, the present state can be considered to be the self in a state of lack, or in any of the stages of realization. The distant state could be a metaphor for the realized self as it is experienced in the return which occurs in re-collection. For Marcel's discussion of disquiet implies that what one longs for in this state is one's true being or center--one's equilibrium.[2]

Marcel's analysis of nostalgia supports this interpretation. He argues that, etymologically, "nostalgia" implies the idea of a wished-for return. The country from which one is exiled is allied to him in the sense that it is his real center. But it never coincides with his present place of exile--his contingent here-and-now. In terms of the self,

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[1] RM, pp. 207-208; PI, pp. 30-31.

[2] PI, pp. 21, 23.

nostalgia is a longing to come home to the self, to be what one really is. It concerns an aspiration for an inner peace or harmony which is not given to start with. It is linked to the need for being--an aspiration of a "being-less" for a "being-more."[1]

At this point, Marcel has come full circle. He returns to the ontological exigency or urge to transcend which was the initial stimulus to self-realization. The difference, however, is that in the beginning it was the starting point for personal change, and now it has become a necessary aspect of the transformed person. The experience of disquiet, therefore, is requisite in order that I fully be a self. While disquiet is not a valuable experience when it approaches anguish, it becomes so when it is closer to aspiration.[2] It is a necessary ferment for personal growth. "Une âme à laquelle toute inquiétude sur soi est étrangère est une âme sclérosée."[3] Disquiet is the condition of the progress and creation which is necessary for the self to be realized. It allows me to develop or actualize my most valuable potentialities; my response to the world becomes truly inventive.[4]

However, Marcel is now faced with a problem. If this longing or disquiet is necessary to all stages of development of the self, full realization of the self becomes impossible. If I have realized my full being, I am no longer nostalgic for it. On the other hand, if nostalgia is present, I have not yet realized this self. Because man is essentially

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[1] RM, p. 108; PI, pp. 21-22; HP, pp. 180, 186.

[2] HP, p. 186.

[3] Ibid., p. 182.

[4] Ibid., pp. 84-85, 185-186.

a "wayfarer," he is always moving towards a goal which he both sees and does not see. And without the maintenance of the sense of disquiet as a stimulus to this movement, he becomes immobilized or dies.[1]

Marcel suggests occasionally that there is a way of moving beyond the conflict between disquiet and realization. This is by philosophy. Metaphysics, he claims, is the act by which disquiet defines itself and partially suppresses or transposes itself.[2] Philosophy is a means of mastering disquiet. However, this cannot be a real solution, for most of Marcel's comments on philosophy take a very different direction. He views philosophy as an ongoing journey, which is in fact stimulated by disquiet. Philosophy must forever remain incomplete. As soon as it yields to complacency it has ceased to exist. Its path should remain uncharted and its very nature is to repeatedly call into question what has been accepted.[3] Marcel prefaces Présence et immortalité with the statement: "Le mythe d'Orphée et d'Eurydice est au coeur même de mon existence."[4] This suggests that for Marcel there is inevitably an element of incompletion and even frustration at the heart of philosophy.

Philosophy, then, cannot transcend or resolve the disquiet in the self because disquiet is in turn a condition of the existence of philosophy. So it appears that for Marcel disquiet is necessary to the self and cannot be transformed without the sacrifice of an essential part of a person. Between myself and my being there must always be a gap.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 189.

[2] PI, p. 2.

[3] RM, p. 231; PI, p. 15; HP, p. 72.

[4] PI, p. 7.

[5] RM, p. 33.

Insofar as this gap is necessary, I can never achieve my full being. I can "turn towards" my being, and perhaps narrow this gap, but I can never completely make it up. The being of the self, therefore, is both present and distant. All are partially strangers to their own depths. The grandeur of the person resides in this ontological deficiency, in this seeming to be both more and less than a person.[1] "L'accord parfait est inconcevable pour l'homme itinérant que je suis, pour l'homme en route vers ... . C'est-à-dire, au fond, pour l'homme purement et simplement, car un homme qui ne cheminerait plus ne serait plus du tout un homme."[2] There is no final crystallization of the self. I cannot affirm of myself, "I am."[3] Disquiet, incompletion and lack are present both at the start of the journey towards realization and at every stage of that journey.

But how can the realized self both exist and not exist? Marcel could answer this question by arguing that the realized self is the self that experiences disquiet. If this is the case, disquiet is different from ontological lack. It is on the order of the "unrest" experienced by the artist or the saint. Upon realization, the ontological lack which characterizes man's condition is no longer experienced, because the mode of existence in which such a characterization is meaningful has been transcended.

However, if Marcel were to develop his thought in this direction, he would face problems with his contention that there is a necessary gap between a person and his being. Marcel maintains that man's nature is

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[1]FR, pp. 33, 129; RI, p. 157.

[2]FR, p. 129.

[3]HV, p. 31.

such that he is always seeking his true center or self. One can dream of an ultimate harmony or unity, but he cannot attain it. Therefore, disquiet and realization are not compatible. For when there is a gap between a person and his being, this gap cannot be a characteristic of his being. And if he is always seeking his true center, the experience of seeking cannot be one component of that center.

It is, perhaps, because of the conflicts which emerge in his study of the self, that Marcel finds it impossible to present a complete "conception" of the self. Philosophical analysis can clear the way for understanding and can indicate wrong approaches to the self. Marcel's critique of objective conceptions of the self, for example, serves this purpose. But to demand a complete picture of the self is to overtax the capacity of philosophy. Ultimately, no such picture is possible. Philosophy, at its best, can only suggest or point.

# CHAPTER V

## A CRITICAL DISCUSSION

This chapter undertakes a critical examination of some of the major arguments which make up Marcel's conception of the self. One is his contention that objectification distorts the self. A related argument is that participation must be substituted for self-knowledge. Because Marcel uses his criticisms of objectification and self-knowledge to support the conceptions of participation and mystery, these criticisms are examined in detail, in an attempt to isolate some of the assumptions behind them.

In addition, it has been maintained that there is a fundamental conflict between an "essential" self and a "concrete" self in Marcel's philosophy. This conflict is explored further here with particular emphasis upon a clarification and evaluation of the role of the "essential" self. The concluding section of this chapter presents a reformulation of a number of Marcel's insights about the self. While this reformulation starts from Marcel's conception of the "concrete" self, it outlines a framework which is more systematic than that offered by Marcel. In so doing, it aims at a resolution of some of the difficulties introduced by the "essential" self.

## A. Objectification

Marcel maintains that under no circumstances is the objective approach to the self adequate. If the self is considered to be an object, a distance is established between the philosopher and the self. The philosopher becomes a spectator and the self a spectacle, which is observed, described and classified. Also when the body or the past are objectified, a distance is maintained. The body is viewed as a possession or an instrument; the past as a succession of images or a collection of events. Each in turn is deprived of its individuality and concreteness and is understood in terms of what it has in common with other objects.

Marcel bases his criticisms of objectification on the contention that when the self is converted into an object, its "subjective identity" is eliminated, and a mistaken objective identity is substituted in its place. One result of the substitution is that the unique features which go to make up the self as a presence are partially, if not completely, dismissed. In the case of the body, its "felt" quality and its unmediated characteristics are ignored. In the case of the past, a "fluid" quality and a resistance to totalization are sacrificed. In each situation, distortion lies in the fact that relations are introduced where no relations have been experienced.

Even more important than the misrepresentation of the body or of the past is the fact that the self per se is distorted when objectified. The self as a presence is "more" than the body or the past. Its subjective identity has features which cannot be reduced either to the body or to

the past. Throughout Marcel's analyses, however, these distinguishing features of the self remain elusive. While there is a suggestion that the body and the past are modes of the self, Marcel never indicates directly what the self is.

One resolution of this difficulty can be made by an appeal to the entire discussion of self-realization. Marcel might argue that he implicitly defines the self in his many phenomenological analyses. The self is that which experiences ontological lack, ontological exigency and realization. Since it is the only "entity" which exhibits this unique ontological flexibility, it is thus distinguished from all other presences. While the body and the past are defined in their own right as presences, Marcel does not speak of them as having more or less being, or as approaching their "real" being. And while hope, love and fidelity are sometimes described by Marcel as having more or less being, he does not argue that they are accompanied by an experience of ontological exigency. It is the self alone which can go through the entire process of realization.

Using this conception of the self, Marcel attacks all attempts to objectify self-realization. Whether it is objectification of a stage of self-realization, such as the experience of ontological exigency, or objectification of a mode of the self, such as the body, it is equally subject to criticism. While Marcel stresses different facets of the problem, depending on the aspect of the self which is under discussion, there is a common strand running through all of his criticisms. This is the argument that a presence is converted into an object and thereby distorted.

Marcel's position is that no one thing can be both a presence and an object. One of the two alternatives must be eliminated. However,

Marcel's own procedure can be cited as a reason for rejecting this conclusion. In spite of the fact that he argues that the self cannot be objectified, his analyses are based on the assumption that the self can be an object. And regardless of his claim that no one thing can be both a presence and an object, his discussions of the self depend on this very possibility. Thus he is found to be doing in practice what he contends is impossible in theory.

In order to talk about the self at all, it is necessary to establish a distance from the self. Whether the self is a presence, a machine or a spectacle, in studying the self, the philosopher objectifies it. Marcel's analyses of self-realization do not exclude such objectification, for the very reason that they are analyses. They purport to suggest or explain various facets of the self. Because they are meant to indicate something about the self, the self of necessity becomes the object of the investigation. The kind of object that it is remains to be established, but the fact that it is an object is undeniable.

Because Marcel uses language to refer to the self, he cannot avoid objectification. He might argue that the use of words in his case is non-objectifying, because the words are intended to suggest the self rather than to provide a precise description of it. However, while it can be maintained that there are numerous non-objective uses of language, such as occur in poetry or oratory, it is difficult to see how Marcel's use of language can be included in one of these categories. While the words he uses may be introduced solely for the purpose of suggesting or pointing to aspects of the self, the self remains the object of the suggestion or the pointing.

If, in order that it be studied at all, the self must be an object,

is it then necessary that it lose its "subjective identity"? Marcel's answer in the affirmative is based upon his assumption that objectification alters what it objectifies. He argues that an objective approach converts the dynamic into the static, it mediates what is immediate, and it abridges or falsely emphasizes the data presented to it. However, could it not be maintained on the contrary that an objective approach can serve to indicate that the object in question is dynamic, immediate, and more full and varied than the description of it?[1] Instead of distorting the self, it provides one way of showing what the self is.

For Marcel, the self cannot retain its identity if it is an object. The way in which the self is approached alters what the self is. His persistent reiteration of this position can be attributed in part to his refusal to develop an epistemology. He does not sharply distinguish a theory of self-knowledge from an ontology of the self. However, if the traditional distinctions are introduced into the discussion, some of the difficulties which emerge could be eliminated. If an analysis of the self is considered to be a means of understanding the self, it can be maintained that the self is an object of inquiry, but as an object it retains its identity. If it is a presence, it remains a presence; if it is a machine, it remains a machine.

In an inquiry of which the self is the object, it can be assumed that the self is a certain kind of object. It does not lose its uniqueness because of the fact that other phenomena can also be objects. What it has in common with other things is its ability to be an object of inquiry. What

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[1]Hocking, in a discussion which is in large part sympathetic to Marcel, comments, "I am inclined to the thesis that all meanings, including the wordless meanings of music and the other arts, are destined to meet the relentless and ultimately successful assault of the concept. For, after all, the concept imposes no constraint on that which is conceived. Changeless as the concept is, there is a concept of change, quite as valid as the concept of the static; there is a concept of the conceivable, another of the inconceivable." William E. Hocking, "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XIV (June, 1954), 441.

it is, if unique, stays unique. As an object of inquiry some of its traits may be revealed, others may not. But the fact that it is an object does not alter these traits. The philosopher approaches the self as an object in order to understand the self. If the self is a presence, he aims at discovering what kind of an object this presence is.

That objectification need not necessarily be misleading can be shown by the use of one of Marcel's own examples. In his criticisms of objective conceptions of the past, he argues that the "fluid" character of past events cannot be revealed if these events are collected in a chronology or identified with what is recorded in a journal. He contends that a bias or slant is introduced if the past is objectified. The selection and emphasis of some events rather than others is governed by present feelings and concerns, not by what the past was. Consequently the past is distorted.

A weakness in Marcel's discussion of objective conceptions of the past can be traced to his assumptions about objectification. It distorts the past, he argues, because by making the past an object, it implies that the past is not "fluid." Chronologies and journals are slanted because they cannot provide the past as it "actually was." However, again, Marcel's own procedure can be cited to challenge his conclusions. His journal entries, which constitute a large part of his philosophical output, make no attempt to provide a total picture of his past. Nor do they convey in all cases the "fluidity" of this past. They serve instead to isolate facets of his experience which he considers philosophically significant. Aspects of the past become objects for the journal, but they are made objects for the purpose of understanding.

The "fluid" quality of the past need not be denied just because the past is the object of a journal or a chronology. A representation of the past may not acknowledge this quality, but this is not to say that objectification makes it impossible to do so. Whether a particular quality of the past is recognized or not depends on the aspects of the past which are under consideration. If the philosopher wishes to explore the non-simultaneous character of past events, as Marcel does, he has only to specify that it is this facet of the object which concerns him.

In addition, Marcel's conclusions about bias or slanting are open to question. Why must bias occur in all objective representations of the past? While it is true that present feelings and concerns influence a selection of past events, does it follow that these events must of necessity be misrepresented? Marcel could argue that the very fact that selection takes place implies that the past will not be presented as it "really was." Yet if this is so, every approach to the past, including the participatory approach, entails bias. For even in participating in the past, one only participates in parts of it. Perhaps Marcel's argument could be altered to make the point that understanding of the past is partial rather than complete. In this case, the problem is not one of bias, but one of the inaccessibility of some parts of the past to the inquirer.

Could it be that Marcel is in fact arguing against the misuse of objectification rather than against objectification itself? It is misused when it is expected to reveal all aspects of the object. This could be corrected by an acknowledgment that only some features of the object are being explored. If I say that I was sad as a child, I am not pointing out everything about my past, nor am I reproducing my past. Instead I am trying to bring to light certain features which are of present interest

to me. The danger lies not in objectification but in the possibility that the past will be viewed as only one kind of object. Thus in saying that my childhood was sad, I may be led to interpret all of the events of my childhood in this light, ignoring other equally important aspects.

If it is argued that the self as an object of philosophical inquiry reveals a variety of characteristics, some of the problems to which Marcel refers can be minimized. Each objective approach stresses certain aspects of the self, not all of its aspects. Some approaches focus on the more immediate and unique aspects of the self; others are more scientifically oriented. I can consider the self to be a presence, or I can view it as the object of a statistical study. Marcel's position can be interpreted as a proposal for viewing the self as a particular kind of object, rather than as an attack on all objectification.

An objective approach to the self, therefore, does not force the philosopher into distorting the self. The features of the self which lead Marcel to designate it a presence are not denied, if the self is made an object of inquiry. They are only denied if the philosopher insists that the self is the kind of object which does not exhibit these features. Furthermore, to objectify the self is not to say that the self is only what is revealed about it as an object. Nor is it to say that the phenomena of the self exist in the same order or with the same consistency which may characterize a conception of the self. In all cases the method is to be distinguished from its object. The method aims at an understanding of the object, not at a conversion of it or an identification with it.

A parallel can be drawn between Marcel's criticisms of objectification of the self and his general critique of systematization in

philosophy. He contends that the attempt to order and systematize philosophic truths also leads to distortion. It is on the strength of this argument that he develops a number of his criticisms of the Idealists. However, Marcel's assumptions about systematization raise a set of difficulties similar to those already discussed. He assumes that a philosophical system cannot allow for non-systematic elements, and that systematization forces that which it systematizes to be other than it is.

An alternative to Marcel's position is a more flexible attitude towards philosophical method. Systematic philosophy provides one kind of insight; Marcel's exploratory "research" provides another. Since it could be argued that there are diverse facets to the subject-matter, each approach can be justified. Marcel is particularly careful not to "force" philosophical truths into a system. However, there is the possibility that he could equally be forcing these truths into a non-systematic framework--in particular if they evidence systematic traits.

It is, perhaps, a misrepresentation of Marcel's approach to philosophy to ignore his frequent contention that his rejection of systematization is a matter of personal integrity. He stresses that he is unable to use any other kind of philosophical method. When this is presented as an autobiographical fact, there can be no objection. However, when it is extended to become a general criticism of systematization, it is less acceptable. It could well be that for another philosopher, personal integrity would demand the use of a more systematic method.

## B. Self-Knowledge

Marcel's views on self-knowledge are based in large part upon his criticisms of objectification. He suggests that it is because the self cannot be an object that it cannot be known. If the philosopher persists in an attempt to objectify the self, his conclusions about self-knowledge become increasingly contradictory. It is the difficulties that Marcel finds within theories of self-knowledge which lead him to reject epistemological terminology altogether. "L'existence du soi serait donc liée à l'impossibilité d'une connaissance intégrale de soi."[1]

While Marcel in no way allies himself with other philosophers in his attempt to resolve the problems of self-knowledge, his formulation of these problems suggests that he is in close touch with the epistemological tradition stemming from Descartes. In particular, Marcel criticizes Kant's statement and solution of the self-knowledge problem. Kant avoids some of the difficulties of a theory of self-knowledge by establishing the transcendental self as a subjective condition or presupposition of knowledge, and by leaving the empirical self as the object of knowledge. Yet Marcel rejects this solution for what he calls its "functional dualism." He maintains that the unity of the self is destroyed by the Kantian position.

While he does not devote any time to criticisms of post-Kantian views of self-knowledge, Marcel would find similar reasons for rejecting most subsequent solutions to the problem. As examples, two of the many recent philosophical discussions of self-knowledge can be cited--those of

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[1] JM, p. 242.

William James and Gilbert Ryle. James, who finds Kant's transcendental self unworkable, introduces the concepts of the "I" and the "me." The "I" is the passing subjective thought which knows the "me" or empirical self. Only when it becomes a past moment in the "stream of consciousness," can the "I" be an object of knowledge.[1]

Ryle also speaks of the "I" but calls it "systematically elusive." He deals with the self-knowledge problem by converting knowledge of the self into a "higher order" commentary on a performance. Ryle suggests that no present commentary can comment on itself, and this fact explains why the "today's self" perpetually eludes one's grasp.[2]

If confronted with these positions, Marcel would argue that both James and Ryle are saddled with the remnants of Kantian dualism. James' "I" never catches up with the "me," and Ryle splits the self into two different kinds of performances. In both cases, the self functions in two ways, the two functions being separated in James by a temporal gap and in Ryle by a logical gap. To Marcel, these views, like that of Kant, would violate the experienced unity of the self. Not only do they make the self an object, but they also misrepresent the self by dividing it into parts.

One escape from the dilemma presented by such positions is to take the self out of the epistemological framework altogether. This is attempted in philosophies which view the self primarily as an agent, not as a subject in the knowing relation. While Marcel would be sympathetic with this rejection of epistemological categories, he would not concur with

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[1]William James, The Principles of Psychology (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1950), I, pp. 340-341.

[2]Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pp. 195-196.

the accompanying de-emphasis of the philosophical problems which give rise to the categories. It is because he considers the difficulties to be real, not meaningless, that he introduces the theory of participation.

Marcel's approach to the problem is to maintain that secondary reflection allows the philosopher to transcend the initial split of the knowing relation into subject and object. Since it is the subject-object division which gives rise to the problems of self-knowledge, once the division is transcended, these problems are eliminated. The self is not known; it is affirmed. It is a presence, understood only by participation. Participation yields an "exclamatory consciousness" of the self, a feeling which is affirmative but otherwise indescribable. Feeling, Marcel says, is in its own right, a massive transcendent reality, which goes beyond any "relative" interpretations of it. "Le sentiment ... pourrait seul être traité comme une réalité massive, transcendante par rapport aux interprétations relatives qu'elle suscite."[1]

In arguing that self-knowledge is impossible, Marcel uses as his model the substantialist theory of the self. This is the view, rooted in Cartesian metaphysics, that the self is an independent self-sufficient substance with the traits of identity, unity and continuity.[2] It could

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[1]JM, p. 296. A criticism of Marcel's emphasis on feeling can be taken from John Laird's discussion of the self. Laird comments, "There is no ground for assigning this predominance to feeling, even in respect of its private and particular character. Feeling may be the usual index of such particularity in the self, but it is not, intrinsically, more obviously 'ours' than other experiences. Are not a man's acts of memory, of association, of judgment, as characteristic of him as his feelings?" John Laird, Problems of the Self (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), p. 91.

[2]Two detailed discussions of the substantialist position can be found in Risieri Frondizi, The Nature of the Self: A Functional Interpretation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 1-20; and Sydney Shoemaker, Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), Ch. II.

be maintained that until recently the substantialist self was thought the only self worth consideration. This being the case, the only real alternative, if one did not accept the substantialist position, was a version of the "no self" theories.[1] Hume, extending Berkeley's critique of matter, offered the classic statement of this alternative. "For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other . . . I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."[2]

Attacks on the substantialist view of the self come from all directions, from psychologists as well as philosophers. Allport calls it a "homunculus," Ryle a "category mistake" and Shoemaker an "obvious truism."[3] However, it is worth noting that the substantialist position is still important enough to be subjected to critical treatment. The persistence of the position, even if only as an object of criticism, suggests that it carries with it corollaries which are useful for an understanding of human behavior. In particular, the substantialist theory offers one explanation of the facts of unity, continuity and personal identity in the individual. The views which reject the substantialist position are all faced with the problem of finding alternative hypotheses which can account for these phenomena.

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[1]See Frondizi, The Nature of the Self, p. 127.

[2]David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 252.

[3]Gordon W. Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 52, 54; Ryle, The Concept of Mind, pp. 15-18; Shoemaker, Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity, p. 44. However, Shoemaker is careful to point out that the lack of clarity in the statements of the substantialist position makes the refutations of the position inconclusive (p. 42).

Marcel, therefore, is not alone in his attack on the substantialist theory of the self, and in using its inadequacies as a starting point for his own conception. If the self is substance, difficulties do arise--over the meaning of "substance," over the role of mind and body in the substantialist theory, and over knowledge of the self. It is the latter problem in particular which claims Marcel's attention. Substantialism implies that an endless series of knowing "I"s must be encompassed for the self to be known. In setting out to know myself as knower, I introduce a new "I" to be known. I then attempt to know that "I"--to include it along with the first knowing "I." But another "I" is thus introduced and so on, ad infinitum. With "I"s repeatedly appearing in this fashion, there is always one more "I" to be known; and consequently, self-knowledge can never be achieved.

Marcel directs his criticisms primarily against the substantialist theory of the self. However, he could argue that the infinite regression which he cites is characteristic of any theory in which the self is an object. Whenever the self is posited as something other than the inquirer, the knowing "I" demonstrates the same elusiveness. For example, if the self is an agent, and if as agent it is the object of an inquiry, any attempt to know the self eventuates in an endless series of knowing "I"s. Whatever kind of an object it is, the self has a constantly accumulating content which evades the total grasp of the knower.

While the substantialist theory of the self, then, seems to be the primary object of Marcel's criticisms, he is in fact arguing that any objective conception of the self makes self-knowledge impossible. As long as the self is an object, there is no way in which it can be known. In particular, there is no means of knowing the self as knower.

Therefore, the arguments that Marcel misrepresents the substantialist theory, or that the substantialist theory is not a significant conception of the self, while perhaps useful, do not meet Marcel's position directly. This position is that all objectification of the self entails an infinite regression.

Marcel finds self-knowledge to be impossible because knowledge must be of an object, and the self cannot be an object. He bases his position on the claim that for there to be knowledge, a subject-object division must be made. One cannot speak of non-objective forms of knowledge. Therefore, participation, because it does not allow for the subject-object division, does not provide knowledge. When I participate in my self, my body or my past, I attain some kind of "grasp" of these phenomena, but this grasp is not knowledge, nor are the phenomena objects.

The contention that participation is not a form of knowledge raises a number of difficulties. This is so whether one accepts or rejects his argument that it is impossible to participate in an object. The difficulties arise because of the unnecessary narrow limits which Marcel imposes upon knowledge. Even if it is agreed that the participation which Marcel describes is totally non-objective, what is the understanding which it yields, if not knowledge?

The conception of participation can be better understood as an attempt to broaden the compass of knowledge than as an attempt to replace knowledge. Using Marcel's own example, one could point out that the music in which Marcel participates is more fully known because of this participation. The participation augments his previous knowledge. He may know the music "objectively," as is the case when it is the object of study

or analysis; or he may know it non-objectively, in the actual process of participating in it. If it can be argued that Marcel is trying to broaden the domain of knowledge rather than to eliminate it, his position draws closer to that of Bergson, whose "absolute knowledge" still remains knowledge.

However, this modification of Marcel's theory of participation assumes with Marcel that the self cannot be an object, and furthermore that one cannot participate in an object. The first assumption has already been questioned. It has been argued that it is possible to consider the self an object without denying it the dynamic and unmediated traits which lead Marcel to designate it a presence. But if the self can be an object, and if Marcel in fact works from the view that the self is an object, in what way can one know the self? And how can the infinite regression which he attributes to objective conceptions of the self be circumvented?

If participation is a form of knowledge, as has been suggested, and if it is possible to participate in the self as a presence, then the self can be known. Since it is not contradictory to say that the self as a presence can also be an object, it becomes possible to argue that one can participate in an object. While Marcel insists that participation is a non-objective method of understanding, it could be maintained, on the contrary, that it functions both objectively and non-objectively. Insofar as it is the self in which one participates, this is participation in a presence which becomes an object for the philosopher. Because the self can be both a presence and an object, participation therefore need not be considered to be exclusively non-objective.

Even if Marcel were to concede that participation is a form of

knowledge, he would go on to claim that it is the only possible way of knowing the self. Yet this position also lacks sufficient justification. While I may "share" and "take part in" the self, it is also legitimate to use other approaches to the self in order to know what it is. For example, I can become a spectator and consider the self as a kind of spectacle. I can, in fact, use all of the "objective" approaches which Marcel criticizes. It is not necessary that one means of knowing exclude the others. On the contrary, the different methods allow for an increased number of perspectives on the self.

If it is argued that in participating in the self I come to know the self as a certain kind of object, am I then forced into the infinite regression that Marcel finds present in such a position? How, working from the view that the self can be an object of knowledge, can the self as knower be known? An answer can be drawn from the argument that there are multiple ways of knowing the self. If participation is used in conjunction with other methods, I could maintain that I "take part in" or participate in the self as knower, without the temporal gap necessary to other forms of knowledge. I may know the self, in its mode as my body or my past, by distancing and observation. But I know the self, in its mode as knower, by participation. The infinite regression only occurs if I force the methods which are appropriate for knowledge of some aspects of the self to provide knowledge of all of the aspects of the self.

The discussion of Marcel's views on objectification and self-knowledge suggests the following position. As an object of inquiry, the self has a number of features which lead Marcel to call it a "presence." However, it is possible for it to be known as a presence. It is known, among other ways, by participation. Participation in the self is parti-

cipation in a particular kind of object, but in an object nonetheless. While there are, as well, non-objective forms of participation in the self, philosophical inquiry, at least as it is carried on by Marcel, does not extend to these ways of knowing. In conclusion, the self is known best by a combination of methods, not by one method to the exclusion of all others.

## B. The "Essential" Self: A Criticism

It has been suggested throughout this study that Marcel's conception of the self is in fact made up of two conflicting conceptions. In spite of the fact that Marcel repeatedly stresses unity, he denies the self this unity, both in his critique of objectification and in his analyses of self-realization. While the conflict between the "essential" self and the "concrete" self is such that it could be resolved, Marcel's procedure does not allow him to make such a resolution.

As previously noted, the "essential" self has only one manifestation, that of full realization. Objectification of the "essential" self is impossible. An objective approach presents a pseudo-self, having no relationship to the "essential" self. The only possible way in which the self can be understood is by participation, because the self can never be an object. Similarly, if one tries to convert the body or the past into objects, they lose their respective identities and become false manifestations. The "essential" self can have only one manifestation, and there can be only one way of understanding it.

From the standpoint of the "essential" self, if I am in a state of depersonalization or egoism, I am not a self. In order that I reach

selfhood, the experiences which keep me in the condition of ontological lack must be transcended. This transcendence is accomplished by experiences such as love, fidelity and hope--experiences which also have both real and false manifestations. Until such transcendence takes place, however, I do not have a self. My self lacks being.

The "concrete" self, on the other hand, has not one but many manifestations, all of which are equally real. In addition, there are a number of ways of understanding the self. From the standpoint of the "concrete" self, there is no meaning to the phrase "ontological lack." Egoism and depersonalization are not states of a not-self, nor do they indicate a lack of being. Instead they are states of the self, but ones which, according to Marcel, should be altered. Transformation of the self is not a movement from non-being to being; it is a shift in the nature and quality of experience.

The "concrete" self does not represent a completed state, nor a return to any such state. Experiences such as those of re-collection and creation are less experiences of recovery than of change in the self. When Marcel assumes the existence of the "concrete" self, realization becomes a phenomenon which is in the process of happening, not one which has happened.

Evidence from Marcel's writings has already been given for the presence of the two sets of assumptions about the self. It is supported as well by indirect confirmation. Conspicuously on two occasions, Marcel omits arguments which would be considered appropriate in the context. One of these omissions indirectly confirms his conception of the "essential" self, and the other offers indirect support for his conception of the "concrete" self.

The first of these omissions appears in the discussion of depersonalization and egoism. While Marcel is obviously critical of the experiences he describes, he provides no arguments explaining his position.[1] It is not clear why these states should be transcended. There are no explicit criteria for what appears to be a moral judgment, nor does Marcel justify the absence of criteria.

This omission of critical discussions of egoism and depersonalization suggests that Marcel is implicitly positing the "essential" self. For if the "essential" self is assumed, the states of egoism and depersonalization indicate a lack of being; and they are not manifestations of the self at all. This being the case, no argument is necessary to support the judgment of their inadequacy. Since they are in no way states of the self, and since the goal in question is that of self-realization, Marcel automatically eliminates them as insignificant. The "essential" self is the only self, and it carries value connotations with it.

A similar argument for omission, in a different context, seems to provide evidence for the implicit presence of the "concrete" self. In the discussion of the realized self, it was pointed out that Marcel does not introduce a concept of ontological sufficiency where it would be appropriate.[2] He describes in detail both the lack of being and the means of transcending that lack. Once the lack is transcended, the outcome expected is the state of "full being" of the self; yet at this point Marcel does not pursue the argument to the expected conclusion.

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[1]See supra, p.56.

[2]See supra, p.82.

One possible explanation for the absence of the concept of ontological sufficiency is that the concept does not allow for the disquiet which is essential to man's condition. Marcel's description of disquiet indicates that one must always experience incompletion. Thus there cannot even be moments of ontological sufficiency, for disquiet is always present. A second explanation for the absence of the concept of ontological sufficiency could be that Marcel shifts to the conception of the "concrete" self. When this conception is assumed, there is no reason to speak of ontological sufficiency, because there is no ontological lack and no fluctuation from "less" to "more" being.

The embryonic conceptions of the "essential" and the "concrete" selves coexist for Marcel, in spite of their fundamental conflict. This conflict is rarely explicit, largely because Marcel does not examine at any length the presuppositions operating behind his contentions. When the conflict threatens to emerge, as in the discussion of the realized self, he avoids it by changing the content and direction of the argument. Marcel's opposition to systematization allows him considerable license, since the refusal to develop his ideas systematically leads him to leave many of his insights unanalyzed and undefended.

Some of the major difficulties with Marcel's analyses of the self cluster around his conception of the "essential" self. It is, therefore, to problems inherent in this conception that the discussion will now turn. One such problem stems from Marcel's notion of the ontological lack. Throughout his studies of egoism and depersonalization, his choice of language suggests that even when there is a state of ontological lack, the self is still present. The obscurely felt presence of the self explains the experience of ontological exigency--the "urge" towards being. The

egocentric "moi" imprisons the self, and the self is discovered or liberated as the ontological exigency is met.

Ontological lack, therefore, is the lack of one's being or of one's self. Yet at the same time at which the lack is experienced, the self is present in some form; it is there to be liberated or discovered. As Marcel points out in his discussion of re-collection, one returns to the self. But how can the self be both present and lacking at the same time? It could be argued that the self is present potentially but is lacking because it has not been actualized. Yet this interpretation does not allow for the return to the self. One does not return to a potential. In addition, it is not the potential self which is discovered; it is the actual self.

Marcel could be suggesting that there are two levels to any individual's existence. One of these levels is the complete "real" self; the other level is the incomplete unrealized self. However, this interpretation meets difficulties because of the fact that the "essential" self, as Marcel presents it, has only one manifestation. Because the ontological lack indicates that realization has not taken place, the individual in a state of ontological lack has not achieved selfhood.

Could it be argued that the "essential" self is the reality and the state of ontological lack is the appearance? If the problems which Marcel finds in Bradley's theory of the self can be avoided, perhaps such a position could allow for the combination of the conceptions of the "essential" and "concrete" selves into a single unified theory of the self. The "essential" self would be the reality--the complete self as it "really" is. The "concrete" self would be the appearance--the incomplete self as it exists. Both the reality and the appearance would be the self, but the self in different states of its development.

Criticisms of such a position, however, abound in Marcel's own writings. In his "existential" philosophy, he stresses that the individual, immediate character of the apparent self is equally if not more important than the complete and unchanging character of the "real" self. Yet the appearance-reality split if used to interpret Marcel's position, would force the philosopher to give priority to the self as reality. In fact, because the "essential" or "real" self has only one manifestation for Marcel, the appearance could not be the self at all. In addition, such a position would require that there be a transcendent principle or concept to relate the appearance and the reality. Yet any such transcendent principle would introduce the very abstraction that Marcel wishes to avoid.

Another possible interpretation of Marcel's position is that there are different degrees of ontological lack, ranging from complete to only partial lack of being. If it is possible to speak of partial ontological lack, this lack can perhaps exist in conjunction with the self. That is, I can have a sense of myself even in a state of egoism, because the latter state does not indicate a total lack of being. However, this alternative raises the same problem as that of the levels of existence. How can the self exist in conjunction with a lack in the self, and what unifies these two states to provide for personal identity?

Marcel does occasionally introduce the notion of degrees of being. In one discussion he says, "We can certainly conceive the possibility of a sort of hierarchy among modes of Being so that it would then be possible to be more or less fully."[1] A problem, however, arises in speaking of the

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[1] MB, pp. 65-66. Marcel's "hierarchy among modes of Being" suggests the ontology of Paul Tillich, who develops in detail the theory that there can be degrees of being. However, Marcel would not concur with Tillich's attempt to encompass non-being in being. See Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 34.

"full" being of the self and "less" being of the self in one person at one time--a situation which is created by the concepts of ontological lack and ontological exigency. This is not simply a matter of degrees of being; it is a matter of the simultaneous coexistence of different degrees of being. The former concept can avoid contradiction, but the latter cannot.

It could possibly be argued that Marcel does not intend the concept of ontological lack to be taken in its literal sense. If this is the case, he need not be referring to a lack of being in the self, but instead to the fact that the being of the self is not fully acknowledged. The ontological lack is the blindness to the self which egoism and depersonalization create. The self has full being, but it is not realized because it is unacknowledged.

This interpretation is suggested in particular by Marcel's analysis of re-collection. In re-collection, I return to the self which has always been present; and following this return, the self is realized, while previously it was not. As I introduce a disciplined turning-inward, my self is revealed, just as the full import of a musical theme is revealed as the theme is developed and transformed.[1] Thus in self-realization the self is set free. The experiences of fidelity, hope and love are the means to this liberation.

According to this interpretation, the self evidences a development of which the first stage is its submerged or unacknowledged existence. Another stage is the recognition of the self, and yet another stage is the full realization of the self following upon the recognition. Each stage is the outcome of the one preceding it, and gives rise to the subsequent stage. It is not the "essential" self which changes, but one's

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[1]See supra, p. 89.

understanding or grasp of this self. If Marcel were to accept this interpretation of his position, it would allow for the fact that the "essential" self has only one manifestation; and change in the self would be the increased ability to participate in the self.

Again, however, the proposed interpretation meets problems from Marcel's own analyses, primarily from his criticisms of the Idealists. Any such developmental picture of the self suggests that there is something which unifies the stages of the development. Yet, for Marcel, just as there is no transcendent principle which can relate appearance and reality, there is no general principle which can unite the stages of self-acknowledgment. If Marcel were to introduce such a principle, he would be forced to abandon the very core of his method--the refusal to introduce abstractions and to systematize his philosophy.

As long as Marcel maintains the "essential" self, therefore, the experience of ontological lack remains difficult to explain. While a variety of interpretations of this experience can be introduced, most of them entail positions which Marcel is unwilling to take. The interpretations pull his view of the self towards Idealist conceptions. Consequently they become subject to the same criticisms which Marcel directs against the Idealists.

A second group of difficulties with the conception of the "essential" self appears in Marcel's discussion of how the ontological lack is transcended. In analyzing the means of self-realization, he works primarily from the developmental position just described. The self is present, even when there is ontological lack; but in order for it to be realized, it must be recognized and freed from the encrustation of egoism and depersonalization. The acknowledgment and liberation of the self are effected

with the aid of experiences such as hope, fidelity and love. It is in Marcel's discussion of these experiences that additional problems emerge.

Marcel's analyses of these experiences are similar to his analyses of the self. For example, I have the "real" experience of hope only when I participate in the experience with my whole being, not when I am self-centered or entangled in functionalization. There is a development of hope just as there is a development of the self, with the initial unacknowledged stage, the recognition of what hope really is, and its final full realization.

However, hope, fidelity and love are only realized when the state of ontological lack is transcended. Therefore one must already have attained selfhood when he has these experiences. How, then, can they be considered means to self-realization? They can only be present in their complete manifestation when the self is realized. If all of the experiences which Marcel discusses pass through the same development as the self, then they cannot bring about self-realization. While they are presented as agents of change, they are found in fact to develop on a plane parallel to the self's development. The state of active receptivity can only obtain when the self is realized, yet the realization of the self depends on the presence of this state.

This circularity comes sharply into focus in Marcel's discussion of freedom. It is not freedom alone, Marcel argues, but freedom accompanied by grace which is a factor in self-realization. But he points out that grace can be experienced only if I am open or available.[1] Grace has the

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[1] HP, p. 75.

character of an appeal to which I must make a response; and the response, according to Marcel, is more than a simple "making room." Thus in order to be free, I must be fully receptive.[1] But how is this possible? For this receptivity comes late in the experience of transformation. I am only actively receptive when my self is realized, so it appears that only upon realization can grace be experienced. Because Marcel conceives of freedom as closely linked to self-affirmation, and because he argues that to be free is to be a self, it appears that self-realization is not the result but the condition of a free act.

Marcel discusses this problem in a communication in 1959 to Schaldenbrand, who comments,

> Marcel seeks first to acquit himself of the charge of circularity by pointing out that free activity is an internal process of development whose point of departure is a self more or less closed in upon itself, but whose term is a self open to dialogue with others. Since there is here progression from lesser to greater participation in the "openness" proper to the person, the personal subject who initiates free activity cannot be strictly identified with the personal subject in whom free activity terminates. Nor does Marcel regard his refusal to hypostatize the person as a denial of the self. To his mind, indeed, free action is precisely the nexus that conjoins the self to itself.[2]

But what is the difference or relation between the "personal subject who initiates free activity" and the "personal subject in whom free activity terminates"? The initiation of the "internal process of development" requires that this personal subject already be "open." The ability to be free and the achievement of selfhood are related, but in a way which remains unclear.

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[1] HV, p. 80.

[2] Sister Mary Aloysius Schaldenbrand, Phenomenologies of Freedom: An Essay on the Philosophies of Jean-Paul Sartre and Gabriel Marcel (The Catholic University of America Philosophical Studies, no. 191, Abstract no. 41; Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1960), p. 39.

Because of this circularity, neither the experiences of hope, fidelity and love nor the exercising of one's freedom can be considered means to self-realization. Even the recognition of the ontological exigency cannot be given the role which Marcel assigns it--its role as the stimulus of the self's transformation. In order to recognize the ontological exigency, I must already have experiences which are characteristic of that transformation. I must be available, receptive and free. Thus the stimulus of the development of the self turns out to be present only after the development has started to take place. Because change is already underway when the ontological exigency is recognized, this recognition cannot initiate the change.

It may be that Marcel does not intend ontological exigency to be interpreted as the stimulus of change, nor active receptivity and freedom as the means to change. One has these experiences when change takes place, but the change is not a result of the experiences. The latter invariably accompany self-realization, but they in no way influence the self. In fact the "essential" self cannot be influenced because it does not evidence alteration of any kind. Nor do these experiences influence the gradual recognition of the "essential" self. The development that takes place in self-realization seems to proceed without reference to any exterior "means." Once the development has started, each stage gives rise to the next stage. What initiates this development is still unspecified. However, if the conception of the "essential" self is assumed, it could be that even when there is ontological lack, the "essential" self is not completely unacknowledged and it has within itself the means of initiating its own realization.

However, this view of self-realization takes the control of the process away from the agent. If self-realization proceeds along a path fixed by the laws of the development of the "essential" self, realization is converted into an automatic process. The role which Marcel gives to freedom would have to be considerably curtailed. Marcel maintains that the individual must affirm his growth to selfhood, yet according to this interpretation affirmation could not be instrumental to growth. In addition, if the laws of the development of the self are this firmly fixed, the experiences of ontological exigency and active receptivity lose their central place in self-realization.

There seems, then, to be no conclusive answer to the question of what brings self-realization about. As long as Marcel maintains the conception of the "essential" self, he is forced either into a position which is circular or into a theory of the self which makes self-realization excessively rigid and automatic.

A third difficulty with the "essential" self lies in Marcel's implicit merging of ontological and ethical questions about the self. The value of the self is a direct function of its being. If the self <u>is</u>, of necessity it is good. Insofar as any aspect of the self is judged evil, it is not the self which is bad, but a lack of being in the self. Traces of this identification of being and value appear in the discussions of both the ontological lack and the realized self. Depersonalization and egoism are judged negatively because they indicate a lack of the self's being; and self-realization is the ultimate good, because only when it occurs can one say that the self really <u>is</u>.

Marcel's position places him within the Platonic and Augustinian

traditions, in considering evil to be a lack of being. As is the case in these traditions, however, Marcel is of two minds about his stand. In his earliest writings, the characterizations of finitude, error and illusion move uncertainly between the view that they are pure negation and the view that they have positive force.[1] In Marcel's later writings this problem becomes submerged, only to appear obliquely in the analyses of the self.

The problems with the identification of being and value are of a different order than the previously cited difficulties with the "essential" self. As it is presented by Marcel, this view is not circular or self-contradictory, nor does it burden him in any obvious way with a position which runs counter to his basic principles. It operates primarily to blur some of Marcel's distinctions, rather than to contradict or destroy them. For example, to argue that egoism and depersonalization manifest a lack of being is to underplay their force. The weakness of Marcel's critical discussion of these states can be attributed to the negative character of this position. Very little can be said about why egoism and depersonalization are without value. One can only reiterate the statement that they lack being.

The positive component of Marcel's position raises difficulties as well. He maintains that the realized self is a good because it has being. From this point of view, ethics exists in the shadow of ontology, if it can be said to exist at all as an independent discipline. The criteria for moral judgment become the same as the criteria for the determination of being. Marcel thus gives being a privileged status. It is something

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[1] FP, pp. 31-40.

which is created or discovered, not something which simply is.

This identification of being and value obscures some of Marcel's points about the realized self, because it closes off further inquiry into the reasons for the judgment that the realized self is a good. Marcel's position seems to be that giving reasons for the value of the "essential" self is as empty an enterprise as trying to objectify the self. The self cannot be explained. No list of criteria for moral judgment could indicate why the realized self is a good. One can only understand that this is so in the same way that one can understand anything about the self--that is, by participation. Participation in the "essential" self should eliminate any doubt one might have as to the value of the self.

However, while Marcel is consistent in suggesting this position, the lack of a more detailed argument in its defense deprives his conception of the self of a useful support. Such an argument could be developed from Marcel's views on the nature of man, or possibly from his religious assumptions. There is no lack of implicit criteria for moral judgments within his philosophy, but these criteria seldom emerge.

In summary, the conception of the "essential" self indicates close ties to Idealism, resulting in a number of difficulties for Marcel's position. First, if the conception of the "essential" self is developed, it requires a unifying principle; and such a principle would be alien to Marcel's concrete and non-systematic approach to the self. Secondly, the conception of the "essential" self cannot avoid circularity. No satisfactory explanation of transformation of the self can be offered which does not result in assuming the very phenomenon it sets out to explain. Finally, the conception of the "essential" self allows for an identification of being and value--an identification which leaves notable gaps in Marcel's

argument and which obscures ethical points which should be made central to his discussion.

The difficulties with Marcel's implicit Idealism only surface when the assumptions behind his analyses are isolated and examined in detail. Marcel would be the first to admit that an Idealist conception of the self is unacceptable. In fact he would probably use in criticism a number of the arguments that have been given here. Yet because it is not free from the terminology and basic assumptions of Idealism, his position eventually must meet the same criticisms.

However, Marcel's position is not based solely on Idealist assumptions. As was indicated at the outset, one of his major projects is to free himself from the Idealist tradition. This explicit opposition to Idealism is clearly one reason for the existence of the conception of the "concrete" self along with that of the "essential" self. It is in connection with the conception of the "concrete" self that many of Marcel's proposals in regard to the self can best be developed.

## D. The "Concrete" Self: An Expansion

Marcel's conception of the "concrete" self, like that of the "essential" self, is only fragmentary. Yet if this conception is developed, it can serve as a more adequate foundation for his arguments than either the conception of the "essential" self or the combination of the two conceptions. It is less open to circularity than the conception of the "essential" self, and it allows for a more satisfactory analysis of change. Furthermore, it can better provide for the establishment of criteria for moral judgments about the self. Starting from suggestions drawn from Marcel's analyses, the following discussion will go beyond Marcel's explicit position to propose one way in which the conception of the "concrete" self can be expanded.

The self can take many forms.[1] Whether an egoist or a saint, a person is still a self. The self exists throughout personal change. At no one time is it more real than at another, although at any two times it may be different. However, if the self is characterized in this way, the following questions arise. How is it possible for seemingly disparate states of one individual to be states of the self? Does the self have continuity? Can it be said to have an identity? What unifies the variety of experiences had by any one individual?

The substantialist theory of the self provides answers to these questions, but introduces new difficulties, particularly in the realm of self-knowledge. One possible alternative to this theory, however, is a

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[1]Hereafter, "self" refers to the "concrete" self.

conception of the self which focuses upon structural continuity rather than upon continuity of substance. This is the position of Frondizi, who maintains that the self is "an organized whole, an integrated structure, and experiences are related to one another not through but within the whole. . . . The interdependence of the different experiential groups shows that the self is a structure which is organized and 'makes sense' and that each member occupies its proper place within the structure."[1]

The conception of the self as structure bears some resemblance to Marcel's position. Frondizi contends, for example, that while the self is intimately connected with one's experiences, it cannot be identified with any one or with the sum of these experiences.[2] Marcel would be in agreement with Frondizi on this point. For he too argues that the self cannot be deduced or derived from the experiences which make it up. It transcends any quantitative totalization of elements.[3]

In spite of this resemblance, Marcel does not introduce the concept of structure into his discussions of the self. However, the concept does provide a useful tool for developing his position. If the self is a structure, it can be said that while one's experiences range widely, at all times one remains a self. The self may change, but the fact that this structure exists remains inalterable.[4] Continuity, when it is present,

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[1]Frondizi, The Nature of the Self, p. 176.

[2]Ibid., pp. 125-126.

[3]Marcel's position has its origin in Bergsonian philosophy. Frondizi, on the other hand, while mentioning Bergson, attributes the antecedents of his view to Gestalt psychology. See The Nature of the Self, p. 167, note.

[4]Frondizi uses the concepts of "structure" and "function" interchangeably and means by both an organizational unity. He comments, "I use the term 'structure' rather than 'form' or 'configuration' to translate the German word Gestalt, which, besides carrying the connotation of these two latter concepts, designates a unity that is concrete." The Nature of the Self, p. 173.

can be attributed to the persistence of a particular structure; since the structure of any one person's experiences remains relatively constant. This constancy could provide in part for the feeling of the self's unity, a feeling which Marcel frequently emphasizes.

What distinguishes the self as a structure from other structures? Some of the more detailed answers to this question can be found in psychological theory. Positions vary widely, however, even within any one tradition. One example of an answer is Allport's theory, in which the self is distinguished from other structures by a set of "interlocking" operations of the personality. These "propriate functions" provide the peculiar unity and distinctness of the personality.[1] According to Allport, the task of determining the relevant operations of the personality belongs to the biologist and the psychologist, while ontological and axiological considerations remain within the philosopher's province.[2]

One aspect of the concept of structure which Marcel might criticize is its objective connotation. He would argue that "structure" suggests a physical arrangement. It is a word which refers to objects and which is, therefore, inapplicable to the self. However, if it is stressed here that "structure" indicates the fact of arrangement and not what is arranged, this criticism loses some of its force. The uniqueness of the self is not sacrificed if the self is considered a structure. Just as the self does not lose its character as a presence if it is made an object, so it does not lose this character if designated a structure. The self is the particular kind of structure which includes the experiences

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[1]Allport, Becoming, pp. 54, 61.

[2]Ibid., p. 62.

which Marcel describes--experiences such as fidelity, hope and love.

The question remains, however, as to whether the concept of structure can prove useful in clarifying Marcel's conception of the self. Can the structural conception provide a more satisfactory analysis of change in the self than that offered by the conception of the "essential" self? Since Marcel stresses the importance of transformation and transcendence, an adequate characterization and evaluation of change would do much to strengthen his arguments. An analysis of change in the self must be able to account both for the initiation of the change and for its continuation and direction. For Marcel, the awareness of ontological exigency is the stimulus of the change. Starting with a feeling of dissatisfaction with my present mode of existence, I sense that I can, through an "internal" transformation, go beyond the states of depersonalization and egoism. According to Marcel, I have an intimation of my "real" self in the course of this experience. I recognize the gap between what I presently am and this "real" self.

It has been pointed out that a major difficulty in Marcel's analysis of ontological exigency is that it presupposes that self-realization is actually under way at the time when the ontological exigency is acknowledged. Consequently the acknowledgment cannot be the starting point of self-realization. In addition, the analysis suggests that the realized self already exists when the exigency is experienced. The realization of the self is a return to the "real" self.

If the self is a structure, there is no such "real" self. However, this is not to say that an experience similar to the one which Marcel describes as the recognition of ontological exigency does not

take place. The sense of dissatisfaction with one's present state and the desire to transcend that state are frequently experienced. If the structural conception of the self is assumed, these experiences can be described in the following way. For some reason, such as the influence of another person on me, I become consciously aware that my present existence is unsatisfactory. To use one of Marcel's illustrations, I experience dissatisfaction with my present vocation. Upon acknowledgment of this dissatisfaction, I become aware that I can be different from what I am. But this awareness is not the recognition of a submerged "real" self; it is the positing of a goal. For example, I may experience an institutional setting as vocationally unsatisfactory, and upon recognizing the fact, formulate an alternative. If the realization of this alternative involves a radical change in my mode of existence, such as a shift from external to internal directives, there will be a significant change in my self. The structure of my experiences will be different, and the actual change will be the gradual alteration of this structure.

The goal which I formulate takes its origin from my present experience. Thus in building a new vocational concept, I draw upon my present knowledge--knowledge of my own capabilities or interests. The awareness of this goal, however, is not the recognition of what I really am; it is the recognition of what I can be. I am not discovering or uncovering a self which has always been present; I am utilizing my knowledge to change my present self.

Yet there still is the question of what makes one projected goal more suitable than another. Marcel is not alone in arguing that when I posit such a goal, I have a sense that this goal reveals my "real" self.[1]

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[1]A position which provides an interesting comparison to Marcel on this point is the work of Karen Horney. Like Marcel, she uses the terminology of self-realization and often speaks of the "real" or "essential"

It is frequently maintained that the desire to change one's vocation is based on the feeling that only in a different setting can one fully "be." From this point of view it is argued that without a change in circumstances, one cannot attain his true identity.[1] This argument suggests two questions for a structural conception of the self. Can this feeling of a "real" self be understood without reverting to Marcel's conception of the "essential" self? And why is it that some goals which are posited seem more appropriate than others?

It is possible in part to explain this sense of the "real" self by saying that once the goal is achieved, the changed self is continuous in many ways with the former self. Not all of my experiences change in the realization of this goal. Enough of them remain constant to account for the feeling of "identity." Even if there is considerable fluctuation in my experiences, the alteration of the self is gradual. The way in which these experiences will be structured will depend upon the structure of previous experiences.

While the fact of structural continuity provides for the familiarity of the changed self, it does not, however, indicate why some goals are experienced as more suitable than others. Marcel suggests that these goals seem more appropriate because the self is revealed for the first

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self. However, she maintains a more naturalistic framework for her views, emphasizing growth and the development of potentialities rather than a "return" to the self. Neurosis and Human Growth, Introduction, Ch. I, Ch. VI.

[1]A group of contemporary psychologists uses the concept of personal identity in this way. A review of this school of thought can be found in Helen Lynd, On Shame and the Search for Identity (New York: Science Editions, Inc., 1961).

time when they are achieved. If I experience a liberation when I change my vocation, it is probably because my self is freed from institutional, social or even personal demands. However, as has been noted, one difficulty with Marcel's position is that the precise status of the self which is revealed or freed remains in doubt.

An alternative to Marcel's position could be the view that the experienced liberation and the sense of the suitability of the change are functions of the increased flexibility which occurs. While my self is no more real than it was, I am free to have different kinds of experiences--to exercise capabilities which previously have been unrecognized. The structure becomes less rigid than it was; the experiences less limited. The change in vocation, for example, can allow for the development of interests which have remained unacknowledged prior to the change.

The freedom which is experienced upon change in the self can be considered to be the result of an actualization of potential. The concept of potential could not be used to interpret Marcel's position because of his stress on a return to the self. However, the concept can be introduced into a structural conception of the self. As potential is actualized, the self becomes increasingly complex. The structure which is the outcome of the change is experienced as peculiarly appropriate, because the potential which is actualized has always been present in the self.

It can be maintained, then, that change in the self is a change in one's experience, accompanied by an alteration in the structure of that experience. A complete characterization of such change would draw material from the empirical sciences, such as psychology, biology and anthropology. For the most part, Marcel underestimates the contributions which these

disciplines could make to his analyses--in particular to his discussions of egoism and functionalization. Insofar as a philosopher considers a description of such states to be important to his discussion, it is necessary that he rely on the sciences for material, if his description is to be adequate. Marcel, however, is limited by his critique of scientific approaches to the self. Since he finds in the sciences the paradigm of objectification, he often rejects them as misleading.

To supply a more satisfactory analysis of change than that offered by Marcel, the structural conception of the self must avoid the circularity of the "essential" self. A primary task is to clarify the relationship between the various experiences which Marcel describes and the transformation of the self. It is difficult to determine the role which active receptivity and freedom play for Marcel. A similar difficulty is present in regard to experiences such as hope, fidelity and love. Change appears to depend upon these experiences, yet they presuppose the change.

If the self is considered a structure, these experiences may be seen as characteristic of change in the self, but not as directly instrumental to the transformation. If I change from a withdrawn to an "available" or receptive person, my receptivity is not what gives rise to that change. Instead it is the outcome of the change. Marcel may be correct in arguing that receptivity must be accompanied by other experiences as well, such as hope, creativity and re-collection. But these experiences, like that of receptivity, are not means to the change.

In addition, freedom cannot be considered instrumental to the transformation of the self. If the meaning which Marcel assigns to freedom is accepted, the free self <u>is</u> the transformed self. The free person is the one whose experience is structured in such a way that he is

receptive, creative and fully available. He "wins" his freedom in the process of the self's transformation. None of the experiences which Marcel describes proceed, then, towards a more "real" manifestation. Freedom and receptivity are not more themselves at one time than at another. I may be more free or more receptive at times; but this is a change in myself, not a developmental change in freedom or receptivity.

Marcel introduces the concepts of ontological exigency, active receptivity and freedom to explain the stimulus and the implementation of change. If they do not in fact play these roles, as has been argued, is it possible to describe the stimulus and implementation of change in any other way? The way in which a structural conception of the self would answer this question has already been suggested. Both the initiation and the implementation of change can be attributed to a combination of external and internal factors. Among the external factors would be those described by Marcel in his later writings--the effect of environment and institutions upon the self.

The internal factors which contribute to change are the dynamisms or forces in the personality. Here, any detailed discussion would have to deal with the nature of growth, the dynamics of learning, and the various factors which go into the formation of the self.[1] Again while a philosophical analysis can provide the setting for an inquiry into the internal factors, the filling in of the details is a task which belongs in large part to the empirical sciences.

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[1]A survey of recent material on this topic can be found in Ruth C. Wylie, The Self Concept: A Critical Survey of Pertinent Research Literature (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961).

One aspect of consciously directed change in the self is the evolution and positing of values which, if they are to be realized, entail that the individual change. Transformation of the self, then, becomes a matter of ethical concern. The problems accompanying the characterization of change are not the only ones which beset Marcel's conception of the "essential" self. There is, in addition, the confusion which results from his obliteration of the boundary between ethics and ontology. It could, however, be argued that the evaluation of change in the self is Marcel's most basic concern, and that the ontological analyses, in spite of the space they occupy, are subordinate to questions of value. If this is the case, Marcel's extensive phenomenological analyses can be considered to be proposals, based on implicit moral criteria.

Just as the structural conception of the self can provide for a characterization of change in the self, it can also offer a means of dealing with moral judgments relating to this change. Whatever moral criteria are used to govern conscious self-transformation, they are independent of ontological questions. This is because any change which takes place in the self is not a change from non-being to being. It is a change in the way experience is structured. The self prior to change is fully as much as the changed self.

Implicit in Marcel's analyses of the self are a set of moral criteria, which do not emerge, largely because of the prevalence of the conception of the "essential" self. These criteria take their starting point from his views about the nature of man. The facts of "incarnation," man's "intersubjective nexus" and his being a "creature" serve as the bases for Marcel's proposals for the direction of change in the self. The philosophical problem which confronts Marcel, once such factors are

made explicit, is that which confronts any ethical theory--the need for justification for the moral judgments.

These values could be justified by a number of different sets of principles. For example, it could be argued that creativity, inter-subjective relations and re-collective self-encounter acquire their value as means to the ends of health and growth.[1] Or, if such a view proves to be too scientifically oriented, such experiences can be evaluated by the use of the implicit criteria which Marcel himself introduces. If one were to stay within Marcel's framework, the justification for the judgments he makes could be religious. Or the value judgments could be defended by reference to the criteria which begin to emerge in Marcel's analyses of social and political problems.

The values, therefore, which Marcel promotes in his analyses of the self, need not be sacrificed if an alternative conception of the self is presented. On the whole, a structural conception of the self can set guidelines for an analysis of self-transformation without becoming entangled in the circularity of the "essential" self. It keeps the questions of being and value separate; and it allows for characterizations of the stimulus, implementation and value of change, without becoming involved in the difficulties of an implicit Idealism.

In conclusion, the question can be raised as to whether the concept of the "realized" self can be made meaningful, if the self is designated a structure. This is possible only if one shifts away from the

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[1]See, for example, Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, Part V. For Maslow the concepts of "growth" and "health" are biologically based, and he relies heavily on studies of psychopathology in his formulation of these ends.

language of discovery to that of achievement. It is both possible and useful to speak of "creating" a self. The facts that the self can be significantly altered and that this alteration can be governed by a set of moral criteria, make the achievement of a different self conceivable. While the adjective "realized" has disadvantages because of the suggestion of a privileged "real" self, it can be maintained if qualified in the direction of achievement and creation.

The experience of re-collection plays a central role in Marcel's conception of the realized self. It can now be argued that re-collection is not a recovery or a return. Instead, it is an attempt to alter the present self. It can operate either as an exercise in self-awareness or as part of a conscious reorganization of one's experiences. The distancing and judgment which Marcel attributes to re-collection may still take place, but they are activities which are carried out in relation to the self as it presently is. Creation and transformation begin with this present self, just as the composer starts with an initial theme which he then develops and transforms.

However, if re-collection is reconstituted as an achievement, Marcel's musical analogy eventually breaks down. Once the self is changed as a result of re-collection and other factors, there is no return to the previous self. The same components which were present in the original structure may still be present in the new self, but their reorganization amounts to the articulation of a new structure. Marcel's notion of change in "existential modalities" fits into this hypothesis of a change in structure. The new self is a different modality than the old. Insofar as it maintains aspects of the "initial theme" or prior self, it can be said to

be continuous with the latter. But its change is an alteration, not a return.

The changed self can be called the realized self only if realization does not indicate completion or an end to change. The conception of the self as a structure allows for a factor which Marcel finds important, but one which is difficult to keep consistent with the rest of his position--the self's capacity for additional change. The structural conception of the self provides for this capacity, since experience is always changing. This change may be gradual or rapid, but it is always present. The transformed self is not, therefore, something which has happened; it is something happening.

As such, the realized self can exist in a continuous state of disquiet. When the Idealist presuppositions are eliminated, the possibility of perpetual disquiet does not present insurmountable difficulties to a conception of the self. If realization is a state which includes change, disquiet and realization are not mutually exclusive. The longing, nostalgia and "sense of the profound" which Marcel describes as aspects of disquiet, can coexist with the experiences of love, fidelity and hope. Instead of making self-realization impossible, disquiet becomes a fundamental feature of the realized self.

The fact of the coexistence of disquiet and realization does not make it necessary for the philosopher to introduce a concept of "mystery." If realization is not a return to the self, it does not conflict with disquiet; and there is no problem to be transcended. A conception of the self is possible without internal contradiction or inconsistency. Change and growth, instead of being barriers to a conclusive conception, are among the most basic features which the conception takes into account.

Finally, the relationship of disquiet and realization suggests that the philosopher, as described by Marcel, is in an unique position. Because of his sensitivity to disquiet and because of his awareness of the role of disquiet in self-realization, he is able both to experience this realization and to characterize it--to present, in fact, a conception of the self.

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